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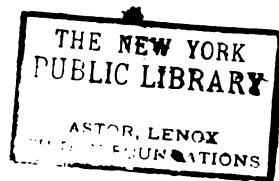


**\*Anon**



**POPULAR STUDIES IN  
AMERICAN LITERATURE**







*Washington Irving*

*"Segnius irritant animum demissa per aures, quam  
quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus."*

*"Things seen by the trustworthy eye, more deeply  
impress the mind than those which are merely heard."*

# American College Course



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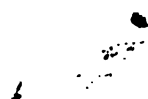


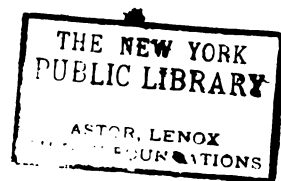
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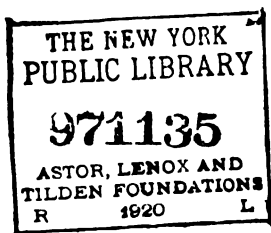


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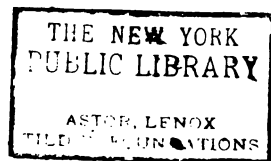
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LEATHERSTOCKING FALLS, WEST SIDE.

*From a photograph by A. J. Telfer.*

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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THE great names of American literature constitute such a galaxy of excellence as would shine illustrious in the annals of any nation at any period of its history. That they belong to a young nation, in the period of its completest absorption in the work of subduing to itself the untamed resources of an unoccupied continent, is one of the marvels of literature.

With scarcely an exception, the character of the men who bore those illustrious names was as exalted as the genius which inspired their writings. Never before in the history of the world were probity of principle and conduct, and graciousness of personal disposition, so completely identified with all that was best and noblest in a nation's literary productivity.

The purpose of the present volume is to give to the general reader a complete though necessarily somewhat limited view of the literary achievement and sustaining personality and character of the authors chosen for consideration. The method of treatment is intentionally simple and elementary. Biographical sketches—in which the requirements only of a popular constituency are had in view—are followed by brief original critical expositions.

These again are illustrated by selections from a large number of our standard authors—selections that embody further useful but simple criticism, and also considerable entertaining reminiscent matter.

To the student-reader who may wish to pursue a further course of reading and study, and especially to the members of working literary clubs, the Readers' and Students' Notes will be found exceptionally valuable. These contain almost every necessary item of information or suggestion for a complete private course of study of each of the authors taken up.

## CONTENTS.

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### WASHINGTON IRVING.

	PAGE
BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY . . . . .	5
TEN-MINUTE TALK . . . . .	15
REMINISCENCES AND CRITICAL STUDIES . . . . .	18
READERS' AND STUDENTS' NOTES . . . . .	41

### JAMES FENIMORE COOPER.

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY . . . . .	49
REMINISCENCES AND CRITICAL STUDIES . . . . .	59
READERS' AND STUDENTS' NOTES . . . . .	84

### WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY . . . . .	89
REMINISCENCES AND CRITICAL STUDIES . . . . .	107
READERS' AND STUDENTS' NOTES . . . . .	121

### RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY . . . . .	127
TEN-MINUTE TALK . . . . .	148
REMINISCENCES AND CRITICAL STUDIES . . . . .	153
READERS' AND STUDENTS' NOTES . . . . .	248



## NOTE.

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WASHINGTON IRVING.



# WASHINGTON IRVING.

1783-1859.

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## *BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY.*

BY JOHN EBENEZER BRYANT.

IRVING was America's first distinguished man of letters. For fifty years—from 1809 to 1859—he was the chief literary man of his country. For forty years out of that fifty—from 1819 to 1859—he was the acknowledged chief. This position of leadership was not sought or striven for. It became his simply in the universal and spontaneous recognition of his merits by his countrymen, and in the equally universal and spontaneous recognition of his merits by readers and critics abroad. And this recognition was not the expression of a mere temporary feeling or caprice. It was based on judgments that subsequent popularity has sustained and subsequent criticism has endorsed. Irving to-day is scarcely less popular, and certainly not less esteemed by those competent to judge of literary merit, than ever he was.

Irving has been called the "American Addison." He has also been called the "American Goldsmith." These appellations, though intended to be honouring, are in

reality detractive. They suppose in their object a genius imitative rather than creative, and in his work a style that is reminiscent rather than original. But Irving's genius, so far as it went, was no more imitative than that of any other great author of equal rank, and his style was his own alone. In short, the only appellation of this sort that is appropriate to him is the "American Irving." Irving's genius was not great and overmastering. He is not one of the giants of literature. The brilliancy of his intellect was not that of a star of the first magnitude. But as the "bright morning star" of our literary firmament, the light that his genius sheds has a charm for us that no other star of the firmament has; and his place in the temple of fame, or rather in the temple of our hearts, is quite as secure as that held by any, even the greatest, of our "sons of light."

Washington Irving was born in New York, April 3, 1783. His father was a Scotchman, stern in discipline, strictly religious, and given to narrow views of life. His mother was an Englishwoman, tender-hearted, gentle, and liberal-minded. Their home was in every way a refined and high-principled one, and though the father's spirit prevailed in its outward ordering, it was the mother's spirit that prevailed in the hearts of the children. Washington was the youngest child of eleven and his mother's chief love. He was also her chief care. He was inclined to be idle and dreamy, and more fond of fun and frolic than of any serious matter. And as he consented only outwardly to his father's views of young people's amusements she was often in deep concern about him, and used

to say in her anxious love: "Oh, Washington, if you were only good!" But Washington was good enough at heart; and the escapades that his mother lamented were only such as youthful high spirits, directed by an ardent and inventive mind, naturally sought vent in. But he was weak in physical constitution, and disposed to consumption, and this frailty of health, together with his natural disinclination to methodical work of any kind, gained for him a very idle upbringing. Though his brothers went to college he did not, and his education was of the slightest. He passed some time in a law office, but to little purpose. He read story books of every sort, and poetry; also travels, and the lighter sorts of biography and history. But his real life was spent in observation and in dreams. One passion that he had was to study the quaint topography and quaint characters that the ancient Dutch settlement of his native city had given being to. Another was to roam, gun in hand, through the woods and forests of those Catskill hills that he was afterward to people with the amusing creatures of his fancy. But it was soon seen that there was a real physical reason for his apparent idleness. By the time he was of age he was so reduced in strength that even his life was despaired of. In the hope that he might be restored to health his brothers kindly arranged to send him on a trip to Europe.

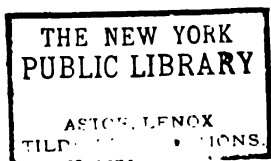
This trip to Europe was the turning point in Irving's life. It restored him to health; and though his predisposition to lung trouble never permitted him to be robust, yet he never afterward suffered from serious illness. But

it was the turning point in his life in another sense. Irving was essentially an observer. He loved to study characters and scenes. His literary art was a natural gift that needed only opportunity to be manifested spontaneously and without effort. But the opportunity needed was not a commonplace one. It could arise only from experience in every sort of society. Irving's travels first gave him this experience. Wherever he went he was most kindly received. His manner, his appearance, his address, his humour, his character, his conversation, his gift of story-telling, his appreciation of music and art, were all in his favour. He spent almost two years abroad, and saw much that was good to be seen in France, Italy, and England; and when he returned to America, having just completed his twenty-third year, he was a man of experience and of culture, to whom every social door was open. And his social success was the needful basis of such success in literature as was possible to him.

But, in the days when Irving was a young man, literature in this country was not a profession, and Irving felt no bent toward any other profession. He studied law, and was called to the bar; but he never practised. He was, indeed, averse to methodical employment of any sort. He was for a time the editor of a literary magazine, but even that duty was irksome to him. In an age when every young man gave himself up to some sort of practical employment, he was, in all outward appearance, a failure. But his social qualities endeared him to every one. And those that were intimate with him knew that his ability was of no common sort, and never lost faith in



*Washington Irving*




him for a moment. It was from his letters they judged. Irving's letters, all through life, even those written in the earliest years of manhood, no matter in what hurry or unpremeditation they were composed, show almost every excellence that his most finished literary compositions show. In their felicitous expressions, in their quaint comparisons, in their humorous characterisations, in their shrewd exposures of current foibles and caprices, in their pathos, their sentiment, their wit, they everywhere give evidence that their author was no ordinary writer; and, before Irving had written a line for publication, his letters had gained for him a reputation both widespread and remarkable. But Irving was an exceedingly modest man, and diffident as to his own powers to a degree quite rare among literary men. For this reason his genius was slow in coming into blossom and to fruit. And had it not been for stress of circumstances it is doubtful if ever he would have become a literary man at all.

Irving, when quite a lad, had written for the *Morning Chronicle* (a daily paper published by one of his brothers) a series of dramatic and social criticisms over the name of "Jonathan Oldstyle." And when he was twenty-four years old he had joined with a young friend and another brother in the publication of *Salmagundi*—a magazine whose mission, as stated by its conductors, was to "correct the town and castigate the age"—and so much appreciated in its mission was this unique literary venture that it was just promising to be a great financial success—a good fortune unheard of for magazines in those days—when its young authors decided to discontinue it. These

early efforts of Irving's gave evidence of his genius, as it were, in the germ, but his next effort was to show it in almost fullest fruitage. In 1809, when Irving was only twenty-six years old, appeared the immortal "History of New York," by "Diedrich Knickerbocker." This was America's first important contribution to the world of fancy and creative imagination. Crude in design and unpolished in finish it may be, but in structure it is original and unique. Its quaint fancy, too, and its whimsical humour, have given it substance and made it enduring. Burlesque fiction has displaced reality, and the Knickerbocker account of the settlement of the great metropolis is the only account that people care to know about. And if the real is found not to agree with the fanciful, the fanciful is preferred by every one and the real left to shift for itself. Knickerbocker's "New York" is now as firm a part of the history of the world as Homer's "Troy."

Overflowing with fun and humour as the Knickerbocker history is, it was composed at a time when its author was prostrated with grief, and suffering from the first shock of the great sorrow of his life. He had become engaged to a young girl whose disposition and character those who knew her united in describing as almost perfect; but though she was not yet eighteen years of age, death had marked her for his own, and had claimed her after an illness of only two short months. Irving not merely idolised her. He loved her with a love that excluded all other loves, and remained with him to the end. Her miniature, a braid of her hair, her Bible and her prayer-book were his inseparable companions



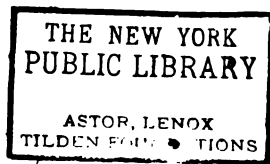
throughout life, and he often slept with them under his pillow. Though he was fond of women's society, and always a favourite with women, and though often he tried to form other attachments, yet his heart remained firm to its first anchorage, and his efforts to unloose it were vain. At his death, the mementos of his loved one were found in a repository of which he had always kept the key, and a memorandum that was attached to them, marked with her name, detailed, in letters faded with age, the simple but heart-moving story—as here set forth—of his first and only real love.

Although the great success of the Knickerbocker history had pointed out to Irving what his true path in life was, yet he remained for years as irresolute as ever. In time he joined his brothers in business; but he disliked all business and was only a silent partner. His social successes, not only in New York but in almost every other Eastern city, continued, and became more pronounced than ever, but to serious occupation of any sort he would not submit. His friends wanted him to enter politics, or at least the civil service, but he "would have none of these things." In 1815 he went to England and met and became acquainted with the leading literary people there; but his old, easy-going, society-frequenting life continued, and no work of any sort would he do. He was not idle in habit. He was not lazy in disposition. But he was extremely diffident as to his literary ability, and having, as he supposed, money enough, and more than enough, for his needs, and being socially welcome everywhere, and thus privileged to go on seeing what was

best in life, he saw no reason for settling down to hard work. But soon a great change took place. The "hard times" that set in, after the close of the wars in 1815, affected all businesses, and the business of the "Irving Brothers" no less than others. For three years the brothers struggled against fate, but it was Washington Irving then that was in health and strength—the others were stricken with illness. Irving now gave evidence of the real character and the real ability that were always in him. Though he could do but little toward helping the business, he did what he could; and when the crash came (1818), and the business became bankrupt, he took upon himself, not only his own support, but the support of his brothers and his brothers' families. But here again the idiosyncrasies of his character were displayed. He was offered an editorship in England that would have brought him in \$5,000 a year. He was urged to accept official appointments in his own country that would have made him independent. Again he "would have none of these things." He had written some "sketches," however, that he knew were in his best vein. And he set to work and wrote others. And in 1819 he had these published—serially—under the name of "Geoffrey Crayon's Sketch Book." To say that these "sketches" were successful is only to half state the truth. They were successful from every point of view. Publishers vied with one another for their publication in book form. The public read them as no work of an American author, and as but few works by British authors, had ever before been read. Critics praised them uniformly, even such critics as Gifford, and



SLEEPY HOLLOW: THE BROOK FROM THE BRIDGE.



Jeffrey, and Lockhart. Great authors also praised them, like Scott, and Byron, and Moore. Byron said: "I know my 'Crayon' by heart." Scott said: "My sides are sore from laughing." And the income that Irving now received from his work was quite sufficient to keep himself, and all those that he considered dependent upon him, in comfort. But, unfortunately, his old-time inaptitude for business affairs remained with him in his years of good fortune. Though he now earned money enough and to spare, yet he very frequently made bad investments of it; and even after many years of success he was forced to say: "With all my exertions I seem always to keep about up to my chin in troubled water, while the world, I suppose, thinks I am sailing smoothly, with wind and tide in my favour."

The "Sketch Book" was not merely a temporary success. It was an important contribution to the world's literature. At least two of its sketches, "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," are immortal. But the effect of its success upon its author was to make him more distrustful of his powers than ever. He had, however, no real reason to be distrustful; and, as events proved, the success he won by the "Sketch Book" was but the prelude to a long series of successes that continued while life lasted. Shortly afterward (1822) he published "Bracebridge Hall," a sort of English "Sketch Book," which Murray, the celebrated London publisher, bought from him for a thousand guineas, without having seen the manuscript. But Irving's most distinguished successes, so far as contemporary popularity

went, were the works he produced during three years he resided in Spain (1826-29). These, "The Life of Columbus," the "Conquest of Granada," and the "Alhambra" (the latter a sort of Spanish "Sketch Book"), made his reputation European, whereas before it had been but American and English. His "Life of Columbus" is still thought one of the best historical biographies ever written, as it is also one of the most popular. But by this time he was longing to be back in his own country again; and, though he subsequently lived three years in England (1829-32)—as secretary of the American legation at London—and was honoured there with every mark of respect that could be paid him, as, for example, the degree of D.C.L. from Oxford and a gold medal from the king because of his merit as a historian, yet no one could be more happy than Irving was, when at last, after seventeen years' absence, he once more found his feet upon the streets of his native city.

Irving was nearly fifty years old when he returned to America, and he had no thought of ever leaving her shores again. His literary career had been crowned with the highest honours, and the income that his books were now able to afford him (from his New York publisher alone he received \$88,000 in eleven years) was sufficient for all his purposes. He bought a cottage at Tarrytown (near New York) and made it a perfect home for himself and his brothers and his brothers' daughters. Thackeray once said he found Irving "with nine nieces under his care." He continued to write and to be renowned and esteemed. There was no social or public honour that he might not

have had if he had chosen to accept it. He was even offered a position in the cabinet of the president. For four years, indeed (1842-46), he was minister at the court of Madrid, being the first American man of letters that was ever honoured in that way. And the honour came to him wholly unsought. In fact, he scarcely wished to



SUNNYSIDE.

accept it, and somewhat amusingly expressed his regret at leaving his beloved "Sunnyside." "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," was his quaint remark. But even when he came back from Spain he had still thirteen other happy and prosperous years to live at "Sunnyside." These years were put in in various ways, but they were never idly passed. Irving's idleness had all been left be-

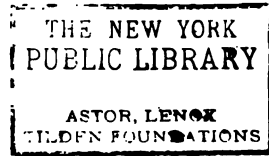
hind in his early manhood. His "Life of Washington" was his principal employment; and, though it was of large design, and required much labour to complete it, yet he lived to see it not only completed but accepted by the public as a masterpiece. The "Washington" came to an end in the spring of 1859. And in the autumn of that same year—in the Indian summer of the autumn—its author's life also came to an end (November 28, 1859). And was not that life also a masterpiece?



DUTCH CHURCH, TARRYTOWN.



IRVING'S GRAVE AT TARRYTOWN.



## *TEN-MINUTE TALK.*

BY PROFESSOR BLISS PERRY,

*Formerly Editor Atlantic Monthly.*

A GENERATION ago the diligent perusal of Washington Irving's works was recommended to every young reader. The same advice is often repeated to-day, and yet the taste for Irving is more commonly a result of literary culture than a means to it. His art is characterised by such a delicate restraint that it seems colourless and feeble to those readers who are in search of powerful effects and startling sensations. There will always be a few happily constituted persons who intuitively perceive and enjoy the classic qualities of reserve, proportion, purity of feeling; but most readers come very slowly to an appreciation of these qualities.

Edward Fitzgerald, the friend of Thackeray and Tennyson, prided himself upon his apothegm that "taste is the feminine of genius." Following this distinction, Irving belonged without question to the gentler order; he was not one of your stark original geniuses who go ramping up and down the world; he was a man of taste. With the delight of a true connoisseur, he appreciated the flavour, the characteristic note, of certain well-defined types of

landscape, of human nature, of history and legend. Whether his eye rested upon a quiet Hudson River hamlet, or a rollicking English Christmas scene, or the solemn glories of Westminster Abbey, his instinct for the artistic possibilities of his theme was invariably happy. There were some phases of human character, and some aspects of human experience, from which his gaze was steadfastly averted. He did not care to look at the sinister side of life. He knew what he liked best, and what was most likely to give pleasure to his readers.

This natural instinct as to the choice of themes, and the manner of treating them, was supplemented by a thorough knowledge of the best English literary models. He rivalled Addison and Goldsmith the more easily for knowing his Addison and Goldsmith. Much as he learned from the eighteenth-century essayists and writers of character-studies, he derived something also from sentimentalists like Sterne. Sentiment was indeed a literary fashion in America during the greater part of Irving's career; but it is to be noted that, unlike some of his British exemplars, he kept within the bounds of manly feeling and good sense. Like Swift, he was fond of his joke, even when carried to the length of elaborate burlesque. But his pleasant fashion of chaffing his reader and making fun of his subject, as in the Knickerbocker "History of New York," shows no trace of the dean's terrible irony.

Irving's indebtedness to previous writers furnishes an attractive theme for the historian of literary movements. Still more interesting material for study is to be found in



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his great service to American literature in his own generation. In the Roundabout paper entitled "Nil Nisi Bonum," Thackeray has called Irving "the first ambassador whom the new world of letters sent to the old," and the phrase is quoted now by all of Irving's biographers and critics. But Irving's reputation ultimately rests upon the personal traits which Thackeray praised so nobly: his goodness of heart, his sunny temper, his gracious and friendly spirit. It is these qualities, together with his picturesque themes and a style of singular flexibility and charm, that make "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" a perpetual delight. Happy is the reader who can come back to them, after experimenting with contemporary literature, and discover that his palate for the more delicate literary pleasures is still unspoiled.

## REMINISCENCES AND CRITICAL STUDIES.

### SELECTED.

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#### HOW IRVING WAS BLESSED BY WASHINGTON.

IRVING was born in the city of New York in 1783, the year in which the Revolution ended in the acknowledgment of American independence. The British army marched out of the city, and the American army, with Washington at the head, marched in. "The patriot's work is ended just as my boy is born," said the patriotic mother, "and the boy shall be named Washington." Six years later, when Washington returned to New York to be inaugurated president, he was one day going into a shop, when the boy's Scotch nurse democratically stopped the new republican chief magistrate and said to him: "Please, your honour, here's a bairn was named for you." The great man turned and looked kindly on his little namesake, laid his hand upon his head, and blessed his future biographer.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, in "*Literary and Social Essays*" (Har.).

#### IRVING'S DREAM OF BEING AN ARTIST.

In Rome, Irving [on his first visit to Europe] came across Washington Allston, then unknown to fame. He



was about three years older than Irving, and just establishing himself as a painter. Irving was completely captivated with the young Southerner, and they formed a very romantic friendship for each other. Irving even dreamed of remaining in Rome and turning artist himself, that he might always be near his friend. He had a great dread of returning to the New World and settling down to the uncongenial work of the law, and he fancied he had some talent for art. He certainly had one essential qualification—a passionate love of colour, and an eye for its harmonies. This love was a great source of pleasure to him throughout life. He always thought that he might have succeeded as a landscape painter. However this might be, the gift of colour-loving is in itself a rich endowment to any mind. There are few purer and higher sources of enjoyment in this life than this love of colour, and it is a possession which ought to be cultivated in every child. But the art scheme was soon abandoned, and he went on to London, where he began his literary work.—HATTIE TYNG GRISWOLD, in "*Home Life of Great Authors*" (Mg.).

#### IRVING'S ONLY LOVE.

"Months elapsed before my mind would resume any tone; but the despondency I had suffered for a long time in the course of this attachment, and the anguish that attended its catastrophe, seemed to give a turn to my whole character, and throw some clouds into my disposition which have ever since hung about it. When I became more calm and collected, I applied myself, by way

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of occupation, to the finishing of my work [the humorous "History of New York"]. I brought it to a close, as well as I could, and published it; but the time and circumstances in which it was produced rendered me always unable to look upon it with satisfaction. Still it took with the public and gave me celebrity, as an original work was something remarkable and uncommon in America. I was noticed, caressed, and for a time elevated by the popularity I had gained. I found myself uncomfortable in my feelings in New York, and travelled about a little. Wherever I went I was overwhelmed with attentions; I was full of youth and animation, far different from the being I now am, and I was quite flushed with this early taste of public favour. Still, however, the career of gaiety and notoriety soon palled upon me. I seemed to drift about without aim or object, at the mercy of every breeze; my heart wanted anchorage. I was naturally susceptible and tried to form other attachments, but my heart would not hold on; it would continually recur to what it had lost; and whenever there was a pause in the hurry of novelty and excitement, I would sink into dismal dejection. For years I could not talk on the subject of this hopeless regret; I could not even mention her name; but her image was continually before me, and I dreamt of her incessantly."—*From Irving's private memorial to Matilda Hoffman, found after his death.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "It is an indication of the depth of Irving's feelings on this subject that he never alluded to this part of his history, or mentioned the name of Matilda even to his intimate friends; but after his death, in a repository of which he had always kept the key, a package was found marked on the outside, '*Private Mems*'; from which it would seem that he had once unbosomed himself.

## IRVING'S FIDELITY AND TENDER MEMORY.

Irving never alluded to this event of his life nor did any of his relatives ever venture in his presence to introduce the name of Matilda. I have heard of but one instance in which it was ever obtruded upon him, and that was by her father, Mr. Hoffman, nearly thirty years after her death, and at his own house. A granddaughter had been requested to play for Irving some favourite piece on the piano, and, extracting her music from the drawer, had accidentally brought forth a piece of embroidery with it. "Washington," said Mr. Hoffman, picking up the faded relic, "this is a piece of poor Matilda's workmanship." The effect was electric. He had been conversing in the sprightliest mood, and he sank at once into utter silence, and in a few moments got up and left the house.

It is an evidence with what romantic tenderness Mr. Irving cherished the memory of his early love, that he kept by him, through life, the Bible and the prayer-book of Matilda. He lay with them under his pillow in the first days of keen and vivid anguish that followed her loss;

This memorial was a fragment of sixteen consecutive pages, of which the beginning and end were missing, and it bore the impress of being a transcript, which he had retained from a letter written as far back as the publication of 'Bracebridge Hall' [1822]. The ink was faded, and it was without address, but it carried internal evidence of having been written to a married lady, with whose family he was on the most intimate terms, and who had wondered at his celibacy, and invited a disclosure of his early history. With this private memorial was found a miniature of great beauty, enclosed in a case, and in it a braid of fair hair and a slip of paper, on which was written in his own handwriting, MATILDA HOFFMAN."—*From Pierre Irving's "Life and Letters of Washington Irving"* (Put.).

and they were ever afterwards, in all changes of climate and country, his inseparable companions.—PIERRE IRVING.

IRVING'S OWN EXPLANATION OF HIS ABSTENTION  
FROM MARRIAGE.

Perhaps the following anecdote may be regarded as of kindred significance.<sup>1</sup> But two or three years before his death, in the course of an interesting conversation with a niece who was visiting him, he was led to descant upon the solitude of a life of celibacy; and then, as if suddenly struck with the incongruity of his own practice, he remarked to her in a half-playful, half-mournful way: "You know I was never intended for a bachelor." She did not, of course, intrude upon the sacredness of his recollections, to inquire how it happened that he had never married; but a few hours afterward, as if furnishing his own solution to the enigma, he handed her a piece of poetry, with the remark: "There's an autograph for you." She took it, and casting her eye upon the paper, perceived it to be a copy of those noble lines of Campbell, "What's hallowed ground?" It was in his own handwriting, and bore the marks of having been transcribed years before. I quote some of the stanzas:

"That's hallowed ground, where, mourned and miss'd,  
The lips repose our love has kiss'd:  
But where's their memory's mansion? Is't  
Yon church-yard's bowers?  
No! In ourselves their souls exist,  
A part of ours.

<sup>1</sup> See preceding selection.

"A kiss can consecrate the ground  
 Where mated hearts are mutual bound;  
 The spot where love's first links were wound,  
   That ne'er are riven,  
 Is hallowed down to earth's profound,  
   And up to heaven.

"For time makes all but true love old;  
 The burning thoughts that then were told  
 Run molten still in memory's mould,  
   And will not cool  
 Until the heart itself be cold  
   In Lethe's pool."

It is in the light of this event of Mr. Irving's history that we must interpret portions of his article on "Rural Funerals," in "The Sketch Book," and also that solemn passage in "St. Mark's Eve," in "Bracebridge Hall," beginning: "I have loved as I never again shall love in this world—I have been loved as I never again shall be loved." To this sacred recollection, also, I ascribe this brief record, in a note-book of 1822, kept only for his own eye: "She died in the beauty of her youth, and in my memory she will ever be young and beautiful."—PIERRE IRVING. (Cf. above.)

#### THE WRITING OF "THE HISTORY OF NEW YORK."

To the youthful editors of *Salmagundi*,<sup>1</sup> with their effervescent spirits, "the town" seemed a huge comedy for their criticism and delight. Nothing escaped them.

<sup>1</sup> An amusing periodical, of which Irving (then in his twenty-fourth year), his brother, William Irving, and his brother-in-law, James K. Paulding, had been the editors.

A popular handbook of New York, written in a dignified, serious style, amused them so immoderately that Irving, with his brother Peter, immediately planned a burlesque of the work, commencing in all seriousness with the creation of the world, and bringing in broad caricatures of the Dutch founders of the city. Anything more serious than an ephemeral parody was not once dreamed of. But Irving soon realised the richness of the material upon which he had stumbled. He found the period of the Dutch supremacy wonderfully full of literary possibilities. It was far enough away in the past to be robed in the haze of romance, and it offered untold opportunities for humorous treatment. The subject grew upon the author, and he carefully elaborated it.

The story of Irving's ingenious hoax, which attributed the authorship of the history to one Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old Dutch gentleman whose disappearance was duly chronicled in the newspapers of the day, is told in the preface of the work. Many were deceived by it; all were curious, and when the work, which had been published in Philadelphia to increase the mystery, appeared, its success was phenomenal. The descendants of the old Dutch settlers were greatly shocked at its liberties, but every one else was delighted with its boisterous humour. It was republished in England, and was hailed by Campbell and Scott as a real addition to the literature of the world.

The humour of the book is irresistible. "The author makes us laugh," says Bryant, "because he can no more help it than we can help laughing." With such perfect

art has it been constructed that it has all the gravity of authentic narration; indeed, it is said to have been once gravely quoted by a German editor, Göller, as real history. —PROF. FRED. LEWIS PATTEE in "*A History of American Literature*" (Sil.).

THE MOST DELICIOUSLY AUDACIOUS WORK OF  
HUMOUR IN OUR LITERATURE.

The "revival" of American literature in New York differed much in character from its revival in New England. In New York it was purely human in tone; in New England it was a little superhuman in tone. In New England they feared the devil; in New York they dared the devil; and the greatest and most original literary dare-devil in New York was a young gentleman of good family, whose "schooling" ended with his sixteenth year; who had rambled much about the island of Manhattan; who had in his saunterings gleaned and brooded over many Dutch legends of an elder time; who had read much but had studied little; who possessed fine observation, quick intelligence, a genial disposition, and an indolently original genius in detecting the ludicrous side of things; and whose name was Washington Irving. After some preliminary essays in humorous literature, his genius arrived at the age of indiscretion, and he produced at the age of twenty-six the most deliciously audacious work of humour in our literature; namely, "*The History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker.*" It is said of some reformers that they have not only opinions, but the cour-

age of their opinions. It may be said of Irving that he not only caricatured, but had the courage of his caricatures. The persons whom he covered with ridicule were the ancestors of the leading families of New York, and these families prided themselves on their descent. After the publication of such a book he could hardly enter the "best society" of New York, to which he naturally belonged, without running the risk of being insulted, especially by the elderly women of fashion; but he conquered their prejudices by the same grace and geniality of manner, by the same unmistakable tokens that he was an in-born gentleman, through which he afterward won his way into the first society of England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE, in "*American Literature*" (Hou.).

HOW THE KNICKERBOCKER "HISTORY OF NEW YORK" HAS BECOME PERMANENT.

Irving follows the actual story [of the history of New York] closely, and the characters that he develops faithfully, although with rollicking caricature, are historical. Indeed, the fidelity is so absolute that the fiction is welded with the fact. The days of the Dutch ascendancy in New York are inextricably associated with this ludicrous narrative. It is impossible not to think of the forefathers of New Amsterdam as Knickerbocker describes them. The Wouter Van Twiller, the Wilhelmus Kieft, the Peter Stuyvesant, who are familiarly and popularly known, are not themselves, but the figures drawn by Diedrich Knickerbocker.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS. (Cf. above.)

## IRVING AND SIR WALTER SCOTT.

The success of Knickerbocker's "History" was immediate, and it was the first American work of literature which arrested attention in Europe. Sir Walter Scott, who was then the most famous of English poets, and was about to publish the first of the Waverley novels, was delighted with a humour which he thought recalled Swift's, and a sentiment that seemed to him as tender as Sterne's. He wrote a generous acknowledgment to the American friend who had sent him the book, and in later years he welcomed Diedrich Knickerbocker at Abbotsford, and the American has given a charming and vivid picture of Scott's home and its master.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

## IRVING IN THE EARLY FIFTIES.

Forty years ago, upon a pleasant afternoon, you might have seen tripping with an elastic step along Broadway, in New York, a figure which even then would have been called quaint. It was a man of about sixty-six or sixty-seven years old, of a rather solid frame, wearing a Talma, as a short cloak of the time was called, that hung from the shoulders, and low shoes, neatly tied, which were observable at a time when boots were generally worn. The head was slightly declined to one side, the face was smoothly shaven, and the eyes twinkled with kindly humour and shrewdness. There was a chirping, cheery, old-school air in the whole appearance, an undeniable

Dutch aspect, which, in the streets of New Amsterdam, irresistibly recalled Diedrich Knickerbocker. The observer might easily have supposed that he saw some later descendant of the renowned Wouter Van Twiller refined into a nineteenth-century gentleman. The occasional start of interest as the figure was recognised by some one in the passing throng, the respectful bow, and the sudden turn to scan him more closely, indicated that he was not unknown. Indeed, he was the American of his time universally known. This modest and kindly man was the creator of Diedrich Knickerbocker and Rip Van Winkle. He was the father of our literature, and at that time its patriarch.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

IRVING AND PRESCOTT AND THE "HISTORY OF THE  
CONQUEST OF MEXICO."

We need not dwell longer upon this period. One incident of it, however, cannot be passed in silence: that was the abandonment of his life-long project of writing the "History of the Conquest of Mexico" to Mr. William H. Prescott. It had been a scheme of his boyhood; he had made collections of materials for it during his first residence in Spain; and he was actually and absorbedly engaged in the composition of the first chapters, when he was sounded by Mr. Cogswell, of the Astor Library, in behalf of Mr. Prescott. Some conversation showed that Mr. Prescott was contemplating the subject upon which Mr. Irving was engaged, and the latter instantly authorised Mr. Cogswell to say that he abandoned it. Although

our author was somewhat far advanced, and Mr. Prescott had not yet collected his materials, Irving renounced the glorious theme in such a manner that Prescott never suspected the pain and loss it caused him, nor the full extent of his own obligation. Some years afterward Irving wrote to his nephew that in giving it up he in a manner gave up his bread, as he had no other subject to supply its place. "I was," he wrote, "dismounted from my *cheval de bataille*, and have never been completely mounted since." But he added that he was not sorry for the warm impulse that induced him to abandon the subject, and that Mr. Prescott's treatment of it had justified his opinion of him. Notwithstanding Prescott's very brilliant work, we cannot but feel some regret that Irving did not write a "Conquest of Mexico." His method, as he outlined it, would have been the natural one. Instead of partially satisfying the reader's curiosity in a preliminary essay, in which the Aztec civilisation was exposed, Irving would have begun with the entry of the conquerors, and carried his reader step by step onward, letting him share all the excitement and surprise of discovery which the invaders experienced, and learn of the wonders of the country in the manner most likely to impress both the imagination and the memory; and with his artistic sense of the value of the picturesque he would have brought into strong relief the *dramatis personæ* of the story.—CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER, in "*Washington Irving*," in "*American Men of Letters*" series (Hou.).

#### HOW FOREIGNERS CONFOUNDED IRVING AND WASHINGTON.

Long ago, in Berlin, I was talking with some American friends one evening at a café and observed a German intently listening to our conversation, as if trying his ability to understand the language. Presently he said to me politely: "You are English, no?" But when I replied, "No, we are Americans," "Americans!" he exclaimed enthusiastically, grasping my hand and shaking it warmly; "Americans, ach! We all know your great General Washington Irving."—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS. (*Cf. above.*)

#### WASHINGTON THE AUTHOR OF "THE SKETCH BOOK"!

Once, when Irving had become famous, an English lady and her daughter paused in an Italian gallery before a bust of Washington. "And who was Washington, mamma?" asked the daughter. "Why, my dear, I am surprised at your ignorance," answered the mother; "he was the author of 'The Sketch Book'!",—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS. (*Cf. above.*)

#### IRVING AND THE GREAT DINNER TO DICKENS.

Irving, I think, made but one speech. It was at the dinner given to him upon his return from Europe in 1832, after his absence of seventeen years. Like other distinguished Americans who have felt the fascination of the

old home of their ancestors, and who have not thought that a narrow heart and a barbaric disdain of everything foreign attested the truest patriotism, he was suspected of some alienation from his country. His speech was full of emotion, and his protestation of love for his native land was received with boundless acclamation. But he could not overcome his aversion to speech-making. When Dickens came, and the great dinner was given to him in New York, Irving was predestined to preside. Nobody else could be even mentioned. He was himself conscious of it, and was filled with melancholy forebodings. Professor Felton, of Harvard, compared Irving's haunting terror and dismay at the prospect of this speech to that of Mr. Pickwick at the prospect of leading that dreadful horse all day. Poor Irving went about muttering: "I shall certainly break down. I know I shall break down."

At last the day, the hour, and the very moment itself arrived, and he rose to propose the health of Dickens. He began pleasantly and smoothly in two or three sentences, then hesitated, stammered, smiled, and stopped; tried in vain to begin again, then gracefully gave it up, announced the toast—"Charles Dickens, the guest of the nation"—then sank into his chair amid immense applause, whispering to his neighbour: "There, I told you I should break down, and I've done it."—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS. (*Cf.* above.)

"THE LIFE OF WASHINGTON."

The book which Irving wished to be the crowning work of his life was "The Life of Washington." Upon it he

expended the most faithful labour, pushing so thoroughly his investigation that few additional facts of importance in the life of the great leader have since been discovered. The work was done under great difficulties. Old age was creeping upon the author. Toward the last the work dragged painfully, and the fifth and last volume appeared only a short time before the author's death. The chief charms of the book are its clear and beautiful style, and its bright, breezy descriptions. Although not a biography of the very highest rank, it is in every way worthy of its position as the standard life of a remarkable man and the crowning work of a brilliant literary career.—**PROF. FRED. LEWIS PATTEE.** (*Cf.* above.)

**IRVING THE ACKNOWLEDGED PATRIARCH OF  
AMERICAN LITERATURE.**

In the year that Irving published "The Sketch Book," Cooper published his first novel, and two years before Bryant's "Thanatopsis" had been published. When, forty years afterwards, in the last year of his life, the last volume of "The Life of Washington" was issued, Irving and Bryant and Cooper were no longer the solitary chiefs of our literature. An illustrious company had received the torch unextinguished from their hands—Whittier, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, Parkman, Mrs. Stowe, had all taken their places, yet all gladly and proudly acknowledged Irving as the patriarch.—**GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.**

HOW IRVING'S COUNTRYMEN LOVED AND  
HONOURED HIM.

Irving was seventy-six years old when he died, late in 1859. Born in the year in which the Revolution ended, he died on the eve of the Civil War. His life exactly covered the period during which the American republic was an experiment. It ended just as the invincible power of free institutions was to be finally demonstrated. His life had been one of singular happiness, both of temperament and circumstance. His nature was too simple and gentle to breed rivalries or to tolerate animosities. Through the sharpest struggles of our politics he passed without bitterness of feeling and with universal respect, and his eyes happily closed before seeing a civil war which, although the most righteous of all wars, would have broken his heart. The country was proud of him: the older authors knew in him not a rival, but a friend; the younger loved him as a father. Such love, I think, is better than fame.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.


## THACKERAY'S ADMIRATION OF IRVING'S CHARACTER.

Of Washington Irving, as of so many of this noble company [his compeers of the early American group of authors], it is especially true that the author was the man. The healthy fun and merry satire of Diedrich Knickerbocker, the sweet humour and quick sympathy and simple pathos of Geoffrey Crayon, were those of the modest master of Sunnyside. Every literary man of Irving's

time, whether old or young, had nothing but affectionate praise of his artless urbanity and exhaustless good-nature. These qualities are delightfully reflected in Thackeray's stories of him in the "Roundabout Papers" upon Irving and Macaulay, "the Goldsmith and the Gibbon of our time." . . . Thackeray tells these little stories with admiring sympathy. His manly heart always grew tender over his fellow-authors who had no acrid drop in their humour, and Irving's was as sweet as dew.

#### IRVING AND THE ROMANCE OF THE KNICKERBOCKER LEGEND.

The service that Irving rendered to American letters no critic disputes; nor is there any question of our national indebtedness to him for investing a crude and new land with the enduring charms of romance and tradition. In this respect, our obligation to him is that of Scotland to Scott and Burns; and it is an obligation due only, in all history, to here and there a fortunate creator to whose genius opportunity is kind. The Knickerbocker legend and the romance with which Irving has invested the Hudson are a priceless legacy; and this would remain an imperishable possession in popular tradition if the literature creating it were destroyed. This sort of creation is unique in modern times. New York is the Knickerbocker city; its whole social life remains coloured by his fiction; and the romantic background it owes to him in some measure supplies to it what great age has given to European cities. This creation is sufficient to



secure for Irving an immortality, a length of earthly remembrance, that all the rest of his writings together might not give.—CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER. (*Cf. above.*)

RIP VAN WINKLE THE UNCONSCIOUS SATIRIST OF  
AMERICAN LIFE.

The first number of "The Sketch Book" contained the tale of "Rip Van Winkle," one of the most charming and suggestive of legends, whose hero is an exceedingly pathetic creation. It is, indeed, a mere sketch, a hint, a suggestion; but the imagination readily completes it. It is the more remarkable and interesting because, although the first American literary creation, it is not in the least characteristic of American life, but, on the contrary, is a quiet and delicate satire upon it. The kindly vagabond asserts the charm of loitering idleness in the sweet leisure of woods and fields against the characteristic American excitement of the overflowing crowd and crushing competition of the city, its tremendous energy and incessant devotion to money-getting.

It is not necessary to defend poor Rip, or to justify the morality of his example. It is the imagination that interprets him; and how soothing to those who give their lives to the furious accumulation of the means of living to behold that figure stretched by the brook, or finding nuts with the children, or sauntering homeward at sunset! . . . It is not thunder that we hear in the Kaatskills on a still summer afternoon—it is the distant game of Hendrick Hudson and his men; and on the shore of our

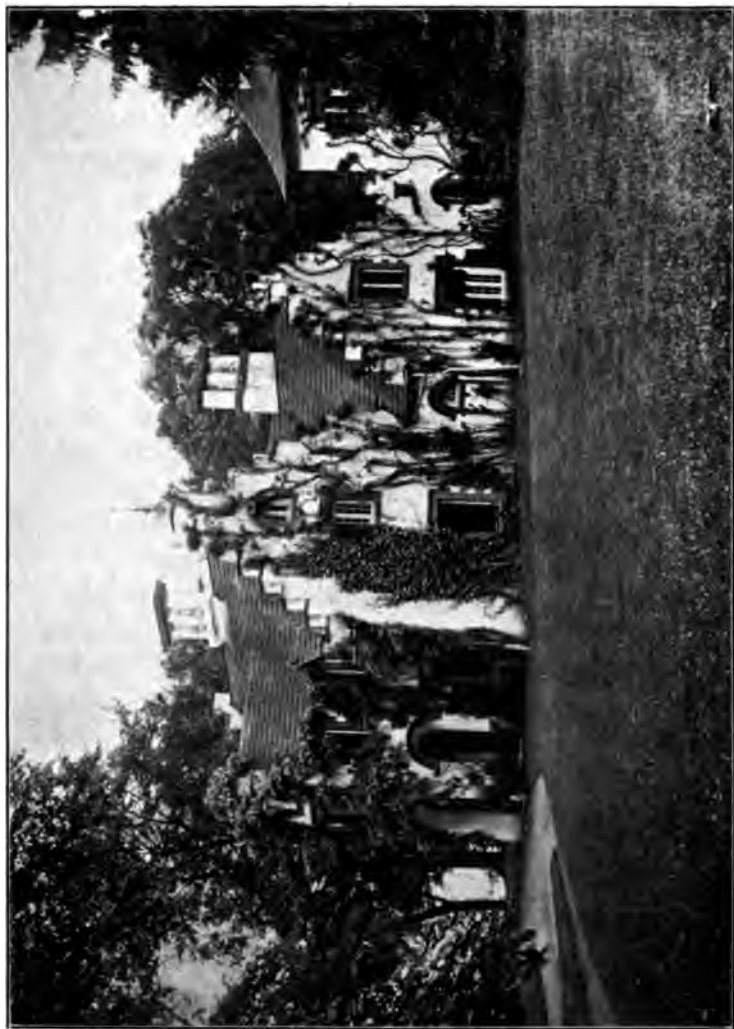
river, rattling and roaring with the frenzied haste and endless activity of prosperous industry, still Rip Van Winkle lounges idly by, an unwasted figure of the imagination, the constant and unconscious satirist of American life.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

IRVING'S WRITINGS PLEASING, ENTERTAINING, AND  
REFINING.

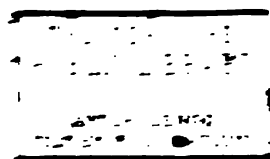
Irving's writings induce to reflection, to quiet musing, to tenderness for tradition; they amuse, they entertain, they call a check to the feverishness of modern life; but they are rarely stimulating or suggestive. They are better adapted, it must be owned, to please the many than the critical few, who demand more incisive treatment and a deeper consideration of the problems of life. And it is very fortunate that a writer who can reach the great public and entertain it, can also elevate and refine its tastes, set before it high ideas, instruct it agreeably, and all this in a style that belongs to the best literature. It is a safe model for young readers; and for young readers there is very little in the overwhelming flood of to-day that is comparable to Irving's books, and, especially, it seems to me, because they were not written for children.—CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER. (*Cf. above.*)

IRVING'S WRITINGS WHOLESOME AND BENEFICENT.

And this leads me to speak of Irving's moral quality, which I cannot bring myself to exclude from a literary estimate, even in the face of the current gospel of art for art's sake. There is something that made Scott and Ir-



IRVING'S COUNTRY RESIDENCE.



ving personally loved by the millions of their readers, who had only the dimmest ideas of their personality. This was some quality perceived in what they wrote. Each one can define it for himself; there it is, and I do not see why it is not as integral a part of the authors—an element in the estimate of their future position—as what we term their intellect, their knowledge, their skill, or their art. However you rate it, you cannot account for Irving's influence in the world without it. In his tender tribute to Irving the great-hearted Thackeray, who saw as clearly as anybody the place of mere literary art in the sum total of life, quoted the dying words of Scott to Lockhart: "Be a good man, my dear." We knew well enough that the great author of "The Newcomes" and the great author of "The Heart of Midlothian" recognised the abiding value in literature of integrity, sincerity, purity, charity, faith. These are beneficences; and Irving's literature, walk round it and measure it by whatever critical instruments you will, is a beneficent literature. The author loved good women, and little children, and a pure life; he had faith in his fellowmen, a kindly sympathy with the lowest, without any subservience to the highest; he retained a belief in the possibility of chivalrous actions, and did not care to envelop them in a cynical suspicion; he was an author still capable of an enthusiasm. His books are wholesome, full of sweetness and charm, of humour without any sting, of amusement without any stain; and their more solid qualities are marred by neither pedantry nor pretension.—CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER. (*Cf.* above.)

## IRVING'S STYLE.

I do not know how to account, on principles of culture which we recognise, for our author's style. His education was exceedingly defective, nor was his want of discipline supplied by subsequent desultory application. He seems to have been born with a rare sense of literary proportion and form; into this, as into a mould, were run his apparently lazy, and really acute, observations of life. That he thoroughly mastered such literature as he fancied, there is abundant evidence; that his style was influenced by the purest English models, is also apparent. But there remains a large margin for wonder how, with his want of training, he could have elaborated a style which is distinctively his own, and is as copious, felicitous in the choice of words, flowing, spontaneous, flexible, engaging, clear, and as little wearisome when read continuously in quantity, as any in the English tongue. This is saying a great deal, though it is not claiming for him the compactness, nor the robust vigour, nor the depth of thought, of many other masters in it. It is sometimes praised for its simplicity. It is certainly lucid, but its simplicity is not that of Benjamin Franklin's style; it is often ornate, not seldom somewhat diffuse, and always exceedingly melodious. It is noticeable for its metaphorical felicity. But it was not in the sympathetic nature of the author to come sharply to the point. . . . It is much, however, to have merited the eulogy of Campbell—that he had added clarity to the English tongue.—CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER. (*Cf.* above.)



IRVING THE RECONCILIATOR OF ENGLAND AND  
AMERICA.

"The Sketch Book" made Irving famous, and with its predecessor, "Knickerbocker," and its successor, "Bracebridge Hall," disclosed the essential quality of his genius. But all these books performed another and greater service than that of winning the world to read an American book: this was the restoration of a kindlier feeling between the two countries which, by all ties, should be the two most friendly countries on the globe. . . . Sydney Smith's question, "Who reads an American book?" was contemptuous and exasperating. But here was an American who wrote books which John Bull was delighted to read, and was compelled to confess that they depicted the most characteristic and attractive aspects of his own life with more delicate grace than that of any living Englishman.

IRVING THE RESTORER OF THE OLD ENGLISH  
CHRISTMAS.

It was Irving who recalled the old English Christmas. It was his cordial and picturesque description of the great holiday of Christendom which preceded and stimulated Dickens's "Christmas Carols" and Thackeray's "Holiday Tales." It was the genial spirit of Christmas, native to his gentle heart and his happy temperament, which made Irving, as Thackeray called him, a peacemaker between the mother-country and her proud and sensitive offspring of the West. He showed John Bull that England is ours as well as his.

## IRVING'S REPUTATION A UNIVERSAL ONE.

Irving's reputation is not local, but is recognised by all cultivated people who speak the English language. If Great Britain established an English intellectual colony in the United States, such men as Irving and Cooper may be said to have retorted by establishing an American intellectual colony in England.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE. (*Cf.* above.)

HOW IRVING SUCCESSFULLY BUFFETS THE WAVES  
OF OBLIVION.

There are two ways in which an author survives: one by the constant reading of his works, the other by his name. Is Milton a forgotten author? But how much is he read, compared with the contemporary singers? Is Plato forgotten? Yet how many know him except by name? Irving thus far holds both. Time, like a thrifty husbandman, winnows its wheat, blowing away much chaff, but the golden grain remains. This is true not only of the whole multitude of authors, but of the works of each author. How many of them really survive in the anthology only? "Astoria" and "Captain Bonneville" and "Mahomet," and other books of Irving will disappear; but "Knickerbocker" and "Rip Van Winkle" still buffet the relentless wave of oblivion, and their buoyancy is undiminished.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS. (*Cf.* above.)

## READERS' AND STUDENTS' NOTES.

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1. For the biography of Irving the standard work is that edited by his nephew, Mr. Pierre Irving, in three volumes. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$4.50.) It is largely autobiographic, consisting for the most part of extracts from journals, note-books, diaries, letters, etc., written by Irving himself. It was prepared by Mr. Pierre Irving in fulfilment of a promise exacted from him by his uncle that he should undertake the task, and though the biographer put his effort before the world with much diffidence the result is a very fascinating and entertaining literary work.

2. But the biography of Irving most available to the ordinary reader is that by Charles Dudley Warner in the "American Men of Letters" series. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.25.) This is an excellent biography in every respect.

3. Every American should read Irving generously. "The Sketch Book," "Bracebridge Hall," "The Alhambra," and "The Life of Columbus" should be in every young American's library.

4. If the reader feels that he cannot undertake to read the whole of the books mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, and that he must make selections, the following may be taken:

(a) From THE SKETCH BOOK: (1) "Rip Van Winkle"; (2) "Westminster Abbey"; (3) "Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

(b) From BRACEBRIDGE HALL: (1) "The Stout Gentleman"; (2) "Ready Money Jack"; (3) "The Schoolmaster," and (4) "The Wedding."

(c) From *THE ALHAMBRA*: (1) "The Palace of the Alhambra"; (2) "The Mysterious Chambers"; (3) "The Court of the Lions."

(d) From *COLUMBUS*: (1) "The First Landing of Columbus in the New World" (vol. i., book iv.).

5. There was something in Irving's mental constitution that made him peculiarly fit to understand and rightfully appraise the life and character of such a man as Oliver Goldsmith. The result is that Irving's "Goldsmith" is one of the most entertaining, and one of the most appreciative, characterisations in literature. Every student of our courses should read this book, and if possible possess it. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$1.50.)

6. Irving's "Knickerbocker's History of New York," though only a *jeu d'esprit*, a mere boyish ebullition of fancy and humour, never intended as a serious contribution to literature, was the thing that first made Irving famous, and one of the things that still keeps him so. The poet Bryant said of it: "Of all mock-heroics, it is the gayest, the airiest, and the least tiresome." The student of to-day should read at least parts of it. The following parts are recommended: (1) "Wouter Van Twiller" (book iii., chap. 1), and (2) "The Manners of Our Grandfathers" (book iii., chap. 3).

7. G. P. Putnam's Sons of New York have long made a specialty of the publication of Irving's works, and their output comprises both many sumptuous and many low-priced editions. Among their editions the following will be found of special interest to students:

(1) "Tales of a Traveller." Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by William Lyon Phelps, A.M., Ph.D. \$1.00.

(2) "The Alhambra." Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by Arthur Marvin, B.A. \$1.00.

(3) "The Sketch Book." Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by William Lyon Phelps, A.M., Ph.D. \$1.00.

8. Complete editions of Irving's works, both sumptuous and



low-priced ones, are also published by T. Y. Crowell & Co., New York.

9. Irving is a favourite author for school study, and "The Sketch Book" is without doubt the most widely studied piece of literature ever produced by an American author. A students' edition of "The Sketch Book" to be commended is that comprised in Nos. 51 and 52 of the "Riverside Literature Series." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 40 cents, bound.) A students' edition of "The Tales of a Traveller" to be commended is that edited by Dr. Brander Matthews and Prof. G. R. Carpenter. (New York: Longmans. \$1.00.)

10. Busy people can scarcely ever nowadays afford time to read an author like Irving completely. Selections are imperative. Even those who have read their Irving, their Poe, or their Hawthorne fully in youth like to have for light refreshment, after the day's hard work is over, a neat volume of their favourite author, that they know contains what is best and richest. To all such we can recommend "Little Masterpieces," edited by Prof. Bliss Perry. (New York: The Doubleday & McClure Co. 30 cents each, cloth; 60 cents each, leather.) Not only can Irving, Poe, and Hawthorne be had in this way, but Macaulay, Ruskin, Carlyle, Thackeray, Lamb, and several other of the world's great masters.

11. Especially to be commended to lovers of Irving are the series of his works published by the Macmillan Co., New York, in the beautiful "Cranford" series. These consist of (1) "Old Christmas"; (2) "Bracebridge Hall"; (3) "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"; and (4) "The Alhambra." This series is especially notable because of its capital illustrations by Randolph Caldecott, G. H. Boughton, and Elizabeth Robins Pennell. (\$2.00 each.)

12. Supplementary reading matter relating to Irving, both critical and reminiscent, of the highest character, will be found as follows:

(1) In an essay on "Washington Irving," by George William

Curtis, in "Literary and Social Essays." (New York: Harper & Brothers. \$2.50.) This work also contains essays on "Emerson," "Hawthorne," "The Works of Hawthorne," "Longfellow," and "Oliver Wendell Holmes."

(2) In a paper on "The Home of Irving," by H. T. Tuckerman, in "Little Journeys to the Homes of American Authors." (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$1.75.) This work also contains papers on the "Homes" of Bryant, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, and other American authors, by George William Curtis, George S. Hillard, Parke Godwin, and others.

(3) In "The Work of Washington Irving," by Charles Dudley Warner, in Harper's "Black and White" series. (New York: Harper & Brothers. 50 cents.)

(4) In "A Eulogy on Washington Irving," by William Cullen Bryant, delivered in 1860, to be found in "The Life of William Cullen Bryant," by Parke Godwin, vol. ii., chap. 32. (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 2 vols., \$6.00.)

(5) In Prof. Charles F. Richardson's "American Literature, 1607-1885," vol. i. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 2 vols., \$6.00; 2 vols. in one, \$3.50.)

(6) In Edwin P. Whipple's "American Literature and Other Papers." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.)

(7) In W. D. Howells' "My Literary Passions." (New York: Harper & Brothers. \$1.50.)

(8) In Rev. H. R. Haweis' "American Humourists." (New York: The Funk & Wagnalls Co. 75 cents.)

13. Further reminiscent and critical matter relating to Irving will be found as follows:

(1) In an article entitled "Sunnyside," in *Harper's Magazine*, December, 1856.

(2) In "Nil Nisi Bonum," by W. M. Thackeray, in *Harper's Magazine*, March, 1860.

(3) In "Recollections of Washington Irving," by G. P. Putnam in the *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1860.



(4) In "Washington Irving," by Donald G. Mitchell ("Ik Marvel") in the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1864.

(5) In "Poe, Irving, and Hawthorne," by G. P. Lathrop, in *Scribner's Monthly*, April, 1876.

(6) In "A Glimpse of Washington Irving at Home," by Clarence Cook, in the *Century Magazine*, May, 1887.

*The Critic*, New York, on March 31, 1883, appeared as an "Irving Centenary Number."

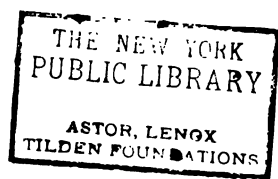


**JAMES FENIMORE COOPER.**





*James Fenimore Cooper*



# JAMES FENIMORE COOPER.

1789-1851.

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## *BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY.*

BY JOHN EBENEZER BRYANT.

COOPER was the first American novelist. He still remains the greatest American novelist. His works have been more widely read, translated into more languages, published in more literary centres, than those of any other of his countrymen. He was the pioneer in two of the greatest fields of fiction. In one of these, the romance of the forest and the prairie, he has had no rival; in the other, the romance of the sea, he has had many followers, many would-be rivals, but few real rivals, fewer equals, and no superior. But great as is Cooper's place in the world of literature, to the student of American literature he is far more interesting as a man than as an author. He was certainly the most remarkable personage in the whole list of American men of letters. His character was intrinsically noble and grand, and his personality, to those

who knew him intimately, genial and lovable. But his temper was irritable to a degree almost unparalleled, and his judgment as to matters of conduct oftentimes downright absurd. His history, therefore, is a sad one. It shows a magnificent endowment of ability and character largely frittered away in courses of action that a sane man of infinitely less and fewer gifts would never have dreamed of. His splendid powers, for months and years, were devoted to controversies and legal disputes that should never have been thought of, much less begun; and his work, of which he accomplished so much, can show the hall-mark of his genius in only a few volumes. These, however, are immortal.

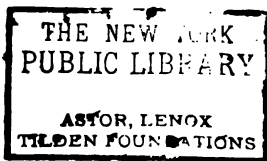
James Fenimore Cooper was born in Burlington, New Jersey, September 15, 1789. His father was of a family of English descent, long settled in this country, a man of wealth, standing, and culture, who, shortly after his famous son's birth, made a home for himself on the shores of Otsego Lake, in New York State, where he had an estate of 17,000 acres, and where he founded a settlement that is now known as Cooperstown. His mother was of Swedish descent, her name being Fenimore. Young Cooper's upbringing, though superior in its advantages to that of most young people of his time, was wholly an affair of the primeval forest. In the scenes and actions that had their being in the contest between advancing civilisation and the pursuits of the Indian, the hunter, and the squatter, he acquired that intimate knowledge of the forest and of forest life with which such works of his as "The Pioneers" and "The Last of the Mohicans"





COOPER'S BIRTHPLACE, BURLINGTON, N. J.


*From a photograph by A. J. Telfer.*



teem; and, no doubt, from his familiarity with the position of social advantage which he saw his father hold with regard to those around him, he derived some of those ideas as to the superiority of old families to new ones which in after years he advanced too offensively for his popularity. When still but a lad he was sent, for education, to live with the rector of an "English church" in Albany, a man of strong social antipathies and predilections, by whom, no doubt, his own instinctive aristocratic prepossessions were encouraged and still further developed. At thirteen he entered Yale, but he did not stay to be graduated there. Unfortunately for his scholarship, he got into some undergraduate frolic, for which, although his father defended him in his course, he was nevertheless dismissed. It was then determined that he should enter the navy. As a preparation he spent a year on a merchant vessel, going before the mast as a common sailor. On January 1, 1808, when a little past eighteen, he was admitted to the navy as midshipman. On January 1, 1811, however, he married, and by his marriage severed his connection with the navy. For the remainder of his life, except for a two years' nominal consulship at Lyons, France, he held no public position nor engaged in any business.

Those early active years of Cooper's—in the forest clearing, on his ship before the mast, and as midshipman in active service on gunboats and frigates on the northern lakes and rivers—were the most important years of his life, and it is a pity that he had not even more of them. They were his real years of education. The scenes he

witnessed then, the impressions he received then, remained in his mind indelible forever, and not one of his many books had any force, or power, or even interest, that was not based upon them. As for his education, technically so called, except what he received from the rector at Albany, it was meagre. He never acquired nicety or exactness of expression. His syntax was often amiss; his grammatical constructions were very often faulty in the extreme, and his uses of words wrong in every sort of way. He had no fine artistic sense either for word-painting, or for plot, or for characterisation. His knowledge of the world was neither wide nor intimate. His knowledge of books was equally deficient. But he was a keen observer, a bold and original thinker, a man of the utmost independence of thought and opinion. And he was a heaven-born narrator and describer. As a por-trayer of scenes and events, especially of scenes and events with action in them, he has never been surpassed. Only very rarely, indeed, has he been equalled. When it comes to telling a story, in the impetuous rush of his genius he seizes the reader and carries him along bodily, oblivious to everything but the excitement of the moment. Grammar, logical constructions, exactness in the use of words, nicety of characterisation—all are forgotten; it is the story, the story alone, that is regarded. This is Cooper's power. This is where he is greatest. And the where-withal to make his narrations and his descriptions real he got from his own personal experiences on sea and lake and river, and in the forest and the forest clearing, before he was twenty-one.



Cooper got into literature late and very accidentally. After his marriage he had first settled near his father's home ; but afterward he settled near his wife's father's home, in Westchester County, New York. Up to the age of thirty-one he had written nothing, nor had he thought of writing anything. Then, one day, having finished reading an English novel, he threw it down with impatience and said: " I could write a better story than that." His wife laughed incredulously, but encouraged him to try. He did try, and a story called " Precaution " was the result (1820). It was published anonymously, and was supposed to be by an English author. Indeed, it was wholly English in idea and tone; for at that time it was thought no other sort of story would be acceptable to readers. But Cooper's Americanism now began to assert itself, and he determined to write a story that should be wholly American and patriotic. Accordingly, on December 22, 1821, " The Spy " appeared.

" The Spy " was an instant success. It made its author famous. It ran through edition after edition in this country, and—what was more surprising—it ran through edition after edition in England. It was translated into French; it was translated into Spanish; it was translated into German; it was translated into Italian. Its constituency of readers embraced not only the United States and England, but also nearly all of Europe, and nearly all of South America. Cooper saw plainly enough what his true business in life was, and at once fell in with it. In 1823 he published " The Pioneers," the first of that magnificent series of tales of which Natty Bumppo is the

immortal hero. And then, in 1824, he published "The Pilot," the first of his sea stories. By this time he had gained for himself, not merely the applause of the crowd, but the praise of fastidious critics. But a greater success yet was in store for him. In February, 1826, appeared the second of the "Leather-Stocking" series, "The Last of the Mohicans." Cooper had now reached a pinnacle of fame, a breadth of popularity, which no other writer but the "Wizard of the North," the Scottish Shakespeare, had ever attained. Indeed, he was named all the world over the "American Scott." And though he never accepted the title with any feeling of pride—if indeed he accepted it at all, for his Americanism was very strong—yet the title was given to him by thousands—one might say, by millions—of readers, as a sincere and hearty expression of their highest consideration and esteem.

Unfortunately, Cooper had scarcely won this exalted esteem, an esteem that all the world gladly accorded him, before he began to destroy it and throw it away. In June, 1826, he sailed with his family from New York for Europe. He did not return again till November, 1833. Most of his time he spent in France; but he resided also for short periods in England, and he made long visits to Italy, Germany, and Switzerland. He was now a man of independent means, for his books were selling all over the world in thousands. He did not, however, live a life of idleness. Two of his best novels—a "Leather-Stocking" tale, "The Prairie," and a sea story, "The Red Rover"—he produced while abroad, and many other things. But he saw much in Europe that offended him.

The ignorance of America there was to him astounding and intolerable. Especially did he come to have a disgust for the Englishman's idea of America. In a published work ("Notions of the Americans," 1828) he vented his scorn of Englishmen because of their ignorance and their patronising ways. When he returned to America, however, he found just as much at home that was offensive to his tastes and judgment as he had found abroad. And now in "letters," pamphlets, "travels," reviews, and even in tales and novels, he undertook a series of castigations, of both Englishmen and his own countrymen, that for vigorous censure and downright fault-finding can find no counterparts in literature. Much that he said had reasonableness and foundation. His purpose in writing was nothing but the correction of erroneous notions, the exposure of false ideals, the revelation of needed truths. He loved his country with a patriotism so intense that he could not bear in foreigners the slightest misconception of her position or her character, nor in her own citizens the slightest evidences of conduct not perfectly high-minded and refined. But, high-principled though his intentions were, his methods were faulty and offensive. He seemed to delight in censoriousness for the mere pleasure of it, to be never so happy as when hitting hardest and criticising most exposingly. The iteration of his objurgations grew tiresome in the extreme. His influence, once so potent, fell away to nothing. The reputation he enjoyed as one of the world's great writers, once so much taken pride in, now aroused only anger and disgust. Bitterness was answered with bitterness, berat-

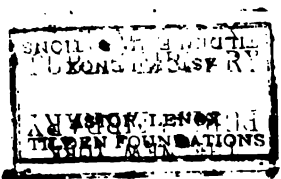
ing with berating. He was denounced, reviled, and abused, as if he were an enemy of his country and an enemy of his race.

When Cooper returned from England he resided for a time in New York; but he soon took up his residence upon his father's old estate, and in the mansion his father had built and lived in at Cooperstown. But, unfortunately, he had not long been living in the place that was so dear to him, because of so many cherished memories, before he became involved in a wretched dispute with his fellow-townspeople over a piece of property which the townspeople supposed to be theirs but which in reality belonged to his own ancestral estate. Still more unfortunately for him, the townspeople's side of this dispute was taken up by the press—first of the locality itself, then of the State, then of the country generally. Many things were said and written in the discussions that followed which Cooper deemed libelous upon his character, and, to get redress, he sued the offending papers in court. One by one he brought on his suits until he had dozens of them in hand. Throughout the length and breadth of the land he was known as the "Great Prosecutor." The execration of the whole nation fell upon him. Pitted against him were some of the cleverest writers and ablest men in the Union—men like Thurlow Weed and Horace Greeley, for example. But it made no difference. He pursued his way as calmly and indifferently as if he were dealing with children. And the marvel of it all is that he won—won in almost every case. He became the terror of editors. Him whom at first they had mockingly called



GRAVES OF COOPER AND HIS WIFE AT COOPERSTOWN, N. Y.

*From a photograph by A. J. Teller.*



the "Great Prosecutor," and afterward with hatred the "Great Persecutor," they now were glad to compromise with and make amends to. No greater evidence of the man's wonderful ability could be adduced than this—for he fought all these legal battles himself, alone.

Cooper's greatest work apart from his novels was his "History of the Navy of the United States," published in 1839. The writing of this work was a labour of love. No American that ever lived was fonder or prouder of the navy than he. It was also a labour of painstaking and conscientious research. And the work was one of great ability, for some of Cooper's best gifts had opportunity to be displayed in it. But it, too, as to a certain point (Perry's battle on Lake Erie) raised a storm of criticism. And here, again, Cooper displayed his fatal idiosyncrasy. He was exceedingly sensitive to criticism when he believed he was right. Libel suits were once more set on foot—some of the most curiously conducted and defended suits in the whole history of jurisprudence. But Cooper's ability was as extraordinary as it was powerful. He was a match for his opponents, no matter how the battles were fought. He won in these "naval" disputes as in all others; and in the end people began to realise that when Cooper said a thing "it had to go."

Cooper's literary achievement was, even in quantity, remarkable. Though it has been surpassed, it has been rarely surpassed. He wrote thirty-two novels as against Scott's twenty-seven. He composed about sixty or seventy distinct works in all. During the first decade of his literary life—that is, the decade from 1820 to 1830—

he published eleven novels, six of them being such as will never grow dim in fame. And his energy and his genius were as remarkable in the end as they were in the beginning of his career. During the last decade of his literary life—the decade extending from 1840 to 1850—he published seventeen novels; and two of these, “The Pathfinder” (1840) and “The Deerslayer” (1841), were in his own opinion, and in the opinion of most of his readers and critics, quite the equal of any he ever wrote. His domestic life was exceedingly happy and fortunate. He was the beloved of his friends, the idolised of his household. Those who knew him best esteemed him most, loved him most. But a stormy life—and despite its domestic felicity Cooper’s life was very stormy—is often a shortened life. The end came long before it was expected; for to the last—almost to the very last—he had been as vigorous in intellect and body as ever he was. After a short illness, however, he passed away September 14, 1851, within one day of the completion of his sixty-second year. His dearly loved wife, who had come to him forty years before as a bride of nineteen, followed only four months later.



COUNCIL OR OTSEGO ROCK, NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER.



VIEW OF OTSEGO LAKE FROM COOPERSTOWN.

*From photographs by A. J. Telfer.*

ASTOR, LENOX  
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

## REMINISCENCES AND CRITICAL STUDIES.

### SELECTED.

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#### COOPER'S EARLY "PIONEER" HOME.

BORN at Burlington, New Jersey, on September 15, 1789, Cooper was taken in infancy to Otsego Lake, in the interior of New York; and here, at the point where the Susquehanna streams forth on its way to join the distant Chesapeake, Cooper's father built the stately mansion called Otsego Hall. The elder Cooper was the owner of many thousand acres along the headwaters of the Susquehanna, and in this wilderness, centring around the freshly founded village of Cooperstown, the son grew into boyhood. He could pass his days on the beautiful lake, shut in by the untouched forest, or in the woods themselves, which rose with the hills and fell away into the valleys. He slept at night amid the solemn silence of a little settlement, a hundred miles beyond the advancing line of civilisation.—PROF. BRANDER MATTHEWS, in "*An Introduction to American Literature*" (Am.).

#### COOPER'S MATERNAL ANCESTRY.

Cooper's mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Fenimore, and the family to which she belonged was of Swed-

ish descent. Cooper himself was the eleventh of twelve children. Most of his brothers and sisters died long before him, five of them in infancy. His own name was at first simply James Cooper, and in this way he wrote it until 1826. But in April of that year the Legislature of New York passed an act changing the family name to Fenimore-Cooper. This was done in accordance with the wish of his grandmother, whose descendants in the direct male line had died out. But he seldom employed the hyphen in writing, and finally gave up the use of it altogether.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY, in "*James Fenimore Cooper*," in "*American Men of Letters*" series (Hou.).

#### THE INFLUENCE UPON COOPER OF HIS WIFE.

It seldom falls to the lot of the biographer to record a home life more serene and happy than that which fell to the share of the man whose literary life is the stormiest to be found in the history of American men of letters. Cooper, like many persons of fiery temperament and strong will, was very easily managed through his affections. In theory he maintained the headship of man in the household in the extremest form. He gives in several of his works no uncertain indication of his views on that point. This only serves to make more conspicuous the fact, which forces itself repeatedly upon the attention, that his movements were largely, if not mainly, controlled by his wife. This becomes noticeable at the very beginning of their union. She was unwilling to undergo the

long and frequent separations from her husband that the profession of a naval officer would demand. Accordingly, he abandoned the idea of continuing in it.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY.

#### THE POPULARITY OF "THE SPY."

From that country [France] its reputation [Professor Lounsbury is speaking of "The Spy"] in no long space of time spread in every direction; translations followed one after another into all the cultivated tongues of modern Europe; and in all it met the same degree of favour. Nor has lapse of time shaken seriously its popularity. The career of success, which began sixty years ago, has suffered vicissitudes, but never suspension; and to this hour, whatever fault may be found with the work as a whole, the name of Harvey Birch is still one of the best known in fiction. No tale produced during the present century has probably had so extensive a circulation; and the leading character in it has found admirers everywhere and, at times, imitators.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY.

#### "THE PIONEERS."

Cooper [after the unexpected success achieved by "The Spy"] set about a task that lay near his heart. This was to describe the scenes, the manners, and customs of his native land, especially of the frontier life in which he had been trained. In 1823, accordingly, appeared "The Pioneers," itself the pioneer of the five famous

stories which now go collectively under the name of the "Leather-Stocking Tales." It was a vivid and faithful picture of the sights he had seen and the men he had met in the home of his childhood, where, as a boy, he had witnessed the struggles which attend the conquest of man over nature. In it appear in comparatively rude outlines the personages whose names and exploits his pen was afterwards to make famous throughout the civilised world. They are in this work of a far less lofty type than in those which followed. "The Pioneers," in truth, though not a poor story, is much the poorest of the series of which it forms a part. The almost loving interest he took in the matter about which he was writing tempted the author to indulge his recollections at the expense of his judgment.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY.

#### COOPER'S SENSITIVENESS TO CRITICISM.

"The Pioneers" was the first work to display a peculiarity of Cooper's character which came afterwards into marked prominence. Cooper in a sense belonged to the school of Scott; and he was so far from denying it that in one place he speaks of himself as being nothing more than a chip from the former's block. But his life would have been far happier and his success much greater had he followed in one respect the example of him he called his master. Scott ordinarily did not read criticisms upon his own writings; and when he did, he was careful not to let his equanimity be seriously disturbed even by the severest attacks. Much of this was, no doubt, due to



MOHICAN CAÑON, AT FIVE MILE POINT.

*From a photograph by A. J. Telfer.*



FIVE MILE POINT, OTSEGO LAKE.

*From a photograph by A. J. Telfer.*

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prudence; but a good deal of it to contempt. . . . The extent to which Cooper was affected by hostile criticism is something remarkable, even in the irritable race of authors. He manifested under it the irascibility of a man not simply thin-skinned, but of one whose skin was raw. Meekness was never a distinguishing characteristic of his nature; and attack invariably stung him into defiance or counter-attack. Unfriendly insinuations contained in obscure journals could goad him into remarks upon them, or into a reply to them, which, at this date, is the only means of preserving the original charge. It was in his prefaces that he was apt to express his resentment most warmly.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf. above.*)

#### HOW "THE PILOT" CAME TO BE WRITTEN.

At a dinner party in New York, in 1822, at which Cooper was present, the authorship of the *Waverley* novels, still a matter of some uncertainty, came up for discussion. In December of the preceding year "*The Pirate*" (by Sir Walter Scott) had been published. The incidents in this story were brought forward as a proof of the thorough familiarity with sea life of him, whoever he was, that had written it. Such familiarity Scott had never had the opportunity to gain in the only way it could be gained. It followed, therefore, that the tale was not of his composition. Cooper, who had never doubted Scott's authorship of these novels, did not at all share in this view. The very reasons that made others feel uncer-

tain led him to be confident. To one like him, whose early life had been spent on top-gallant yards and in becketing royals, it was perfectly clear that "The Pirate" was the work of a landsman and not of a sailor. Not that he denied the accuracy of the descriptions so far as they went. The point that he made was that, with the same materials, far greater effects could and would have been produced had the author possessed that intimate familiarity with ocean life which can be his alone whose home for years has been upon the waves. He could not convince his opponents by argument. He consequently determined to convince them by writing a sea-story.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

COOPER'S POPULARITY WITH HIS IMMEDIATE  
ASSOCIATES.

In 1822 Cooper moved into New York. Here his talents and his reputation gave him at once a leading position in society. Nor were his associates inferior men. He founded a club which included on its rolls the residents of New York then best known in literature and law, science and art. The names of many will be even more familiar to our ears than they were to those of their contemporaries. All forms of intellectual activity were represented. To this club belonged, among others, Chancellor Kent, the jurist; Verplanck, the editor of *Shakespeare*; Jarvis, the painter; Durand, the engraver; DeKay, the naturalist; Wiley, the publisher; Morse, the inventor of the electric telegraph; Halleck and Bryant, the poets.



It was sometimes called after the name of its founder; but it more commonly bore the title of the "Bread and Cheese Lunch." It met weekly, and Cooper, whenever he was in the city, was invariably present. More than that, he was the life and soul of it.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

#### COOPER'S PECUNIARY SUCCESS.

Cooper's pecuniary situation had been largely improved by his literary success. The pressure upon his means had, in fact, been one of the main reasons, if not the main reason, that had led him to contemplate pursuing a literary life. The property left by his father had gradually dwindled in value, partly through lack of careful, uninterrupted management. His elder brothers, on whom the administration of the estate had successively devolved, had died. The result was, that he found himself without the means which in his childhood he might justly have looked forward to possessing. So far from being a man of wealth he was, in the earlier part of his literary career, a poor man. From any difficulties, however, into which he may have fallen he was more than retrieved by the success of what he wrote. Precisely what was the sale of his books, or how much he received for their sale, it would be hard and perhaps impossible now to tell. He was careless himself about preserving any records of such facts. But, besides this natural indifference, he seemed to resent any public reference to the price paid him for his writings as an unauthorised intrusion into his personal affairs.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY.

## THE ABSURDITY OF COOPER'S LAWSUITS.

At the time of which [about 1849] I speak, another figure also was familiar in Broadway, but less generally recognised as it passed than either of the others [Irving and Bryant], although, perhaps, even more widely known to fame than they. This was Cooper, who gave us so many of the heroes of our childhood's delight, but who at this time was himself the hero of innumerable lawsuits, undertaken to chastise the press for what he believed to be unjust and libellous comments upon himself. Now that the uproar of that litigation is silent, and its occasion forgotten, it seems comical that a man for whom fame had already rendered a favourable judgment should be busily seeking the opinion of local courts upon transitory newspaper opinions of himself and his writings. It is as if Dickens, when the whole English-reading world—judges on the bench and bishops in their studies, cobblers in their stalls and grooms in the stables—were all laughing over *Pickwick*, should have sued the *Eatonswill Gazette* for calling him a clown. Thackeray pronounces Cooper's Long Tom Coffin one of the prizemen of fiction. That is a final judgment by the chief justice. But who knows what was the verdict in Cooper's lawsuits to vindicate himself, and who cares?—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, in "*Literary and Social Essays*" (Har.)

## COOPER'S COSMOPOLITAN INFLUENCE AND FAME.

Franklin was the earliest American who had fame among foreigners; but his wide popularity was due



rather to his achievements as a philosopher, as a physicist, as a statesman, than to his labours as an author. Irving was six years older than Cooper, and his reputation was as high in England as at home; yet to this day he is little more than a name to those who do not speak our mother tongue. But after Cooper had published "The Spy," "The Last of the Mohicans," and "The Pilot," his popularity was cosmopolitan; he was almost as widely read in France, in Germany, and in Italy as in Great Britain and the United States. Only one American book has ever attained the international success of these of Cooper's—"Uncle Tom's Cabin," and only one American author has since gained a name at all commensurate with Cooper's abroad—Poe. . . . With Goethe and Schiller, with Scott and Byron, Cooper was one of the foreign forces which brought about the Romanticist revolt in France, profoundly affecting the literature of all Latin countries. Dumas owed almost as much to Cooper as he did to Scott; and Balzac said that "if Cooper had only drawn character as well as he painted the phenomena of nature, he would have uttered the last word of our art."—PROF. BRANDER MATTHEWS (Am.).


#### POE ON COOPER AND HAWTHORNE.

There are two great classes of fiction—a popular and widely circulated class, read with pleasure, but without admiration—in which the author is lost or forgotten, or remembered, if at all, with something very nearly akin to contempt; and then a class, not so popular, nor so widely

diffused, in which, at every paragraph, arises a distinctive and highly pleasurable interest, springing from our perception and appreciation of the skill employed, or the genius evinced in the composition. After perusal of the one class, we think solely of the book—after reading the other, chiefly of the author. The former class leads to popularity—the latter to fame. In the former case, the books sometimes live, while the authors usually die; in the latter, even when the works perish, the man survives. Among American writers of the less generally circulated, but more worthy and more artistical fictions, we may mention Mr. Hawthorne; at the head of the more popular division we may place Mr. Cooper.—*From Poe's review of Cooper's "Wyandotte," published in "Graham's Magazine" in 1843.*

#### COOPER A NOVELIST OF THE PEOPLE.

Cooper is one of the people's novelists as opposed to the novelists of highly cultivated men. This does not imply that he has not been, and is not still, a favourite with many of the latter. The names of those, indeed, who have expressed excessive admiration for his writings far surpass in reputation and even critical ability those who have spoken of him depreciatingly. Still the general statement is true that it is with the masses he has found favour chiefly. The sale of his works has known no abatement since his death. It goes on constantly to an extent that will surprise any one who has not made an examination of this particular point. His tales continue



to be read, or rather devoured, by the uncultivated many. They are often contemptuously criticised by the cultivated few, who sometimes affect to look upon any admiration they may have once had for them as belonging exclusively to the undisciplined taste of childhood.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

COOPER'S WORKS A TONIC FOR WEAK AND  
SENTIMENTAL NATURES.

After the publication of "The Red Rover," in 1827, Cooper's works were not only eagerly welcomed by his countrymen, but were translated into almost all the languages of Europe. Indeed, it seemed at one time that Cooper's fame was co-extensive with American commerce. The novels were intensely American in spirit, and intensely American in scenery and characters; but they were also found to contain in them something which appealed to human nature everywhere. Much of their popularity was doubtless due to Cooper's vivid presentation of the wildest aspects of nature in a comparatively new country, and his creation of characters corresponding to their physical environment; but the essential influence he exerted is to be referred to the pleasure all men experience in the kindling exhibition of man as an active being. No Hamlets or Werthers or Renés or Childe Harolds were allowed to tenant his woods or appear on his quarter-decks. Will, and the trained sagacity and experience directing will, were the invigorating elements of character which he selected for romantic treatment.

Whether the scene be laid in the primitive forest or on the ocean, his men are always struggling with each other or with the forces of nature. This primal quality of robust manhood all men understand, and it shines triumphantly through the interposing fogs of French, German, Italian, and Russian translations. A physician of the mind could hardly prescribe a more efficient tonic for weak and sentimental natures than a daily diet made up of the most bracing passages in the novels of Cooper.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE, in "*American Literature*" (Hou.).

#### THE INEQUALITY OF COOPER'S WORK.

Cooper lived to write thirty-four novels, the merits of which are so unequal that at times we are puzzled to conceive of them as the products of one mind. His failures are not to be referred to that decline of power which accompanies increasing age, for "The Deerslayer," one of his best novels, was written six years after his worst novel, "The Monikins." He often failed, early as well as late in his career, not because his faculties were impaired, but because they were misdirected.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE.

#### COOPER'S FREQUENT DULNESS AND TEDIOUSNESS.

One of the secrets of Cooper's fascination was also one of the causes of his frequent dulness. He equalled De Foe in the art of giving reality to romance by the dexterous accumulation and management of details. But



then—how tiresome they often are! The early chapters of “The Red Rover,” for example, are dull beyond expression. The author’s fondness for detail trespasses on all the reserved fund of human patience. It is only because “expectation sits i’ the air” that we tolerate his tediousness. If we desire to witness the conduct of the man-of-war in the tempest and the battle, we must first submit to follow all the cumbersome details by which she is slowly detached from the dock and laboriously piloted into the open sea. There is more “padding” in Cooper’s novels than in those of any author who can make any pretensions to rival him. His representative sailors, Long Tom Coffin, Tom Miller, Nightingale, Bolt-rope, Trysail, Bob Yarn, not to mention others, are admirable as characters, but they are allowed to inflict too much of their practical wisdom on the reader. In fact, it is a great misfortune, as regards the permanent fame of Cooper, that he wrote one-third, at least, of his novels at all, and that he did not condense the other two-thirds into a third of their present length.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE.

#### COOPER HIS COUNTRY’S NOVELIST OF ACTION.

Cooper is, over all, his country’s novelist of action, and action ever charms when analysis wearies or invention flags. Antedating Hawthorne in fame, surpassing Irving at least in vigour of stroke and extent of field, and standing utterly aside from Poe, Cooper first wore the novelist’s crown in lands west of the Atlantic. His mind was remarkably fertile in planning plots of adventure, and

sometimes in elaborating those plots so that incident succeeded incident without wearisomeness or lack of novelty or probability. It has been said that Cooper had no style; but if his fiery and thrilling episodes of adventure on sea or land are not successful because he was a master of the story-teller's style, his readers have been remarkably influenced by some literary power as yet unnamed.—PROF. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON, in "*American Literature, 1607-1885*" (Put.).

WHY COOPER STILL REMAINS THE NATION'S  
GREATEST NOVELIST.

Cooper remains the American story-teller, the national novelist of the days before analysis became fashionable. After all, most novelists' fame is built up by large constructiveness and not by decorative details. The majority of readers is not composed of analysts and critics, constantly bothered with the *why* and the *how*. Cooper created stories which conquered their readers, and he succeeded on the old-fashioned lines. After all, a novel must entertain, and a cloud of witnesses attest Cooper's entertainingness. His most prominent quality, as a novelist, was wholesome independence of thought and speech, a quality that lies at the bottom of the success of the masters, Cervantes and Le Sage, De Foe and Goldsmith. . . . Therein is the indispensable element in the "Leather-Stocking Tales," which makes us refuse to give them up, or to challenge their right to their individual place in literature and in our favour. Natty



Bumppo and Long Tom Coffin are better known to us, more real personalities, than half our cousins. The last sea-fight; the whale-capture, or the killing of the panther; the wild justice of the wronged Indian's vengeance; the fierce plot and counterplot of the contestants in the Revolution, or of the pioneers of France and England in the new world; and all the parti-coloured panorama of the American man in action, cannot cease to charm those who have blood in their veins and muscles in their arms.  
—PROF. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON. (*Cf.* above.)

#### COOPER'S LEATHER-STOCKING.

Leather-Stocking is a philosopher of the woods, ignorant of books, but instructed in all that nature, without the aid of science, could reveal to the man of quick senses and inquiring intellect, whose life has been passed under the open sky, and in companionship with a race whose animal perceptions are the acutest and most cultivated of which there is any example. But Leather-Stocking has higher qualities: in him there is a genial blending of the gentlest virtues of the civilised man with the better nature of the aboriginal tribes; all that in them is noble, generous, and ideal is adopted into his own kindly character, and all that is evil is rejected. But why should I attempt to analyse a character so familiar? Leather-Stocking is acknowledged, on all hands, to be one of the noblest, as well as most striking and original, creations of fiction.  
—*From William Cullen Bryant's "Commemorative Address on James Fenimore Cooper," delivered in 1852.*

## COOPER'S INDIAN ALL THE WORLD'S INDIAN.

There is little doubt that the world's idea of the Indian has been gained from the "Leather-Stocking Tales," and that the Indian as painted by Cooper will be the Indian of literature for all time. Whether Chingachgook, Uncas, and Hist were true to nature in every respect may be open to doubt, but this matters but little.—PROF. FRED. LEWIS PATTEE, in "*A History of American Literature*" (Sil.).

## COOPER THE ORIGINATOR OF THE SEA-NOVEL.

Cooper added the ocean as well as the forest to the realm of literature. It is hard in these days, when novels of the sea fairly flood the market, to realise that the origin of this kind of literature was so recent. Captain Marryat, Clark Russell, and all the hosts of novelists who have composed sea-stories are but disciples of Cooper.—PROF. FRED. LEWIS PATTEE. (Cf. above.)

## COOPER'S "PILOT."

"The Pilot" is doubtless the best of all Cooper's sea-stories. In it is delineated the immortal Long Tom Coffin of Nantucket, one of the finest of Cooper's creations. The story of the breathless chase of the American frigate down the British Channel followed by the whole English fleet, the wreck of the *Ariel*, and the death of Long Tom, have few superiors in our language, in the



OTSEGO HALL, COOPER'S HOME.

Built 1798 ; burned 1852.

*From an old drawing.*



COOPER PARK IN ITS PRESENT CONDITION.

The Indian monument marks the site of Otsego Hall.

*From a photograph by A. J. Telfer.*

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field of graphic description. The plot of the novel is laid in Revolutionary times, and the "Pilot" turns out to be the famous seaman. Paul Jones.—PROF. FRED. LEWIS PATTEE.

COOPER'S FAULTS AS AN ARTIST AND WRITER.

Cooper wrote rapidly and carelessly, seldom correcting his first manuscript, dashed off in the heat of composition. As a result, the faults of his style are very glaring. His words are ill-chosen, his English often slovenly in the extreme. Many of his novels are without unity of plot and action, running on and on like the tale of a garrulous story-teller. He seems to have had little idea of what the next chapter of his novel was to contain; he often introduces new characters near the end of the book; and sometimes he drags in strange and utterly unnecessary scenes with no apparent reason whatever. His dialogues are far from natural; his characters act often without sufficient motive; many of his tales are sadly untrue to human nature; and the lectures and sermons dragged into his novels are just so much dead weight. In addition to all this, his "females" are shrinking, trembling creatures, without individuality or life, and his juveniles are insipid to the last degree. As Lowell remarked:

"The women he draws from one model don't vary,  
All sappy as maples and flat as a prairie."

—PROF. FRED. LEWIS PATTEE.

## COOPER'S ABOUNDING EXCELLENCES.

Cooper's faults, grave as they are—faults that would condemn a lesser writer to oblivion—may be overlooked when we sum up his excellences. Where he was great was in the portrayal of action and the rush of incident. In narrative power he has never had a superior. In his battle scenes and his description of storm and wreck one is carried headlong with the narrative. The scene actually lives again, and one leaves the book with a sense almost of personal participation in the stirring events recorded there. He had an enthusiasm, elevated and genuine, for wild nature. His pictures of the pathless forest, the solitary lake, the vast and lonely reaches of the prairie, are above criticism. Not only did he add a new field to literature, but a new character—perhaps the only one that America has given to fiction.

“He has drawn you one character, though, that is new,  
One wild flower he's plucked that is wet with the dew  
Of this fresh western world.”—LOWELL.

—PROF. FRED. LEWIS PATTEE. (*Cf.* above.)

## COOPER'S WORLD-WIDE FAME AND HONOUR.

In that way of writing in which he excelled, it seems to me that Cooper united, in a preëminent degree, those qualities which enabled him to interest the largest number of readers. He wrote not for the fastidious, the over-refined, the morbidly delicate; for these find in his genius

something too robust for their liking—something by which their sensibilities are too rudely shaken; but he wrote for mankind at large—for men and women in the ordinary healthful state of feeling—and in their admiration he found his reward. . . . Hence it is that he has earned a fame wider, I think, than any author of modern times—wider, certainly, than any author of any age ever enjoyed in his lifetime. All his excellences are translatable—they pass readily into languages the least allied in their genius to that in which he wrote, and in them he touches the heart and kindles the imagination with the same power as in the original English. . . . Such are the works so widely read, and so universally admired in all the zones of the globe, and by men of every kindred and every tongue; works which have made of those who dwell in remote latitudes wanderers in our forests and observers of our manners, and have inspired them with an interest in our history.—WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT. (*Cf.* above.)

#### COOPER'S CONVENTIONAL CHARACTERISATION.

It has now become a conventional criticism of Cooper that his characters are conventional. Such a charge can be admitted without seriously disparaging the value of his work. In the kind of fiction to which his writings belong, the persons are necessarily so subordinate to the events that nearly all novelists of this class have been subjected to this same criticism. So regularly is it made, indeed, that Scott, when he wrote a review of some of

his own tales for the *Quarterly*, felt obliged to adopt it in speaking of himself. He describes his heroes as amiable, insipid young men, the sort of pattern people that nobody cares a farthing about. Untrue as this is of many of Scott's creations, it is unquestionably true of the higher characters that Cooper introduces. They are often described in the most laudatory terms; but it is little they do that makes them worthy of the epithets with which they are honoured. Their talk is often of a kind not known to human society.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

#### COOPER'S CHARACTERISATION OF WOMEN.

Cooper's failure in characterisation was undoubtedly greatest in the women he drew. . . . His heroines are usually spoken of as spotless beings. They are made up of retiring sweetness, artlessness, and simplicity. They are timid, shrinking, helpless. They shudder with terror on any decent pretext. But if they fail in higher qualities, they embody in themselves all conceivable combinations of the proprieties and minor morals. They always give utterance to the most unexceptionable sentiments. They always do the extremely correct thing. The dead perfection of their virtues has not the alloy of a single redeeming fault. The reader naturally wearies of these uninterestingly discreet and admirable creatures in fiction as he would in real life. He feels that they would be a good deal more attractive if they were a good deal less angelic. With all their faultlessness, moreover, they



THE LEATHER STOCKING MONUMENT AT COOPER PARK.

*From a photograph by A. J. Telfer.*

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do not attain an ideal which is constantly realised by their living but faulty sisters. They do not show the faith, the devotion, the self-forgetfulness, and self-sacrifice which women exhibit daily without being conscious that they have done anything especially creditable. They experience, so far as their own words and acts furnish evidence of their feelings, a sort of lukewarm emotion which they dignify with the name of love. But they not merely suspect without the slightest provocation, they give up the men to whom they have pledged the devotion of their lives, for reasons for which no one would think of abandoning an ordinary acquaintance. . . . It is just to say of Cooper that as he advanced in years he improved upon this feeble conception. The female characters of his earlier tales are never able to do anything successfully but to faint. In his later ones they are given more strength of mind as well as nobility of character. But at best, the height they reach is little loftier than that of the pattern woman of the regular religious novel. The reader cannot help picturing for all of them the same dreary and rather inane future. He is as sure, as if their career had been actually unrolled before his eyes, of the part they will perform in life.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

#### COOPER'S BEST WORK ALWAYS FASCINATING.

These are imperfections <sup>1</sup> that have led to the undue

<sup>1</sup> His conventional characterisation of men, his weak characterisation of women, etc.

depreciation of Cooper among many highly cultivated men. Taken by themselves they might seem enough to ruin his reputation beyond redemption. It is a proof of his real greatness that he triumphs over defects which would utterly destroy the fame of a writer of inferior power. It is with novels as with men. There are those with great faults which please us and impress us far more than those in which the component parts are better balanced. Whatever its other demerits, Cooper's best work never sins against the first law of fictitious composition, that the story shall be full of sustained interest. It has power, and power always fascinates, even though accompanied with much that would naturally excite repulsion or dislike. Moreover, poorly as he sometimes told his story, he had a story to tell. The permanence and universality of his reputation are largely due to this fact.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

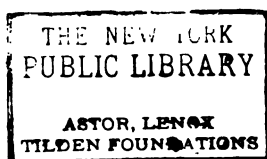
COOPER'S VIVIDNESS AND POWER IN THE RELATION  
OF ADVENTURES.

Cooper's strength lies in the description of scenes, in the narration of events. In the best of these he has had no superior, and very few equals. The reader will look in vain for the revelation of sentiment, or for the exhibition of passion. The love-story is rarely well done; but the love-story plays a subordinate part in the composition. The moment his imagination is set on fire with the conception of adventure, vividness and power come unbidden to his pen. The pictures he then draws are as real to the



**LEATHER STOCKING'S CAVE, EAST SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN**

*From a photograph by A. J. Telfer.*



mind as if they were actually seen by the eye. It is, doubtless, due to the fact that these fits of inspiration came to him only in certain kinds of composition, that the excellence of many of his stories lies largely in detached scenes. Still his best works are a moving panorama, in which the mind is no sooner sated with one picture than its place is taken by another equally fitted to fix the attention and to stir the heart. The genuineness of his power, in such cases, is shown by the perfect simplicity of the agencies employed. There is no pomp of words; there is an entire lack of even the attempt at meretricious adornment; there is not the slightest appearance of effort to impress the reader. In his portrayal of these scenes Cooper is like nature, in that he accomplishes his greatest effects with the fewest means.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

BIRCH, LONG TOM COFFIN, BOLTROPE, AND  
LEATHER-STOCKING.

While in his higher characters Cooper has almost absolutely failed, he has succeeded in drawing a whole group of strongly marked lower ones. Birch, in "The Spy"; Long Tom Coffin and Boltrope, in "The Pilot"; the squatter, in "The Prairie"; Cap, in "The Pathfinder," and several others there are, any one of which would be enough of itself to furnish a respectable reputation to many a novelist who fancies himself far superior to Cooper as a delineator of character. He had neither the skill nor power to draw the varied figures with which

Scott, with all the reckless prodigality of genius, crowded his canvas. Yet in the gorgeous gallery of the great master of romantic fiction, alive with men and women of every rank in life and of every variety of nature, there is, perhaps, no one person who so profoundly impresses the imagination as Cooper's crowning creation, the man of the forests. It is not that Scott could not have done what his follower did, had he so chosen; only that as a matter of fact he did not. Leather-Stocking is one of the few original characters—perhaps the only great original character—that American fiction has added to the literature of the world.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

#### COOPER AS THE PORTRAYER OF THE LIFE OF NATURE.

The more uniform excellence of Cooper lies in the picture he gives of the life of nature. Forest, ocean, and stream are the things for which he really cares; and men and women are the accessories, inconvenient and often uncomfortable, that must be endured. Of the former he speaks with a loving particularity that lets nothing escape the attention. Yet minute as are often his descriptions, he did not fall into that too easily besetting sin of the novelist, of overloading his picture with details. To advance the greater he sacrificed the less. Cooper looked at nature with the eye of a painter and not of a photographer. He fills the imagination even more than he does the sight. Hence the permanence of the impression which he leaves upon the mind. His descriptions, too,

produce a greater effect at the time and cling longer to the memory because they fall naturally into the narrative and form a real part in the development of the story; they are not merely dragged in to let the reader know what the writer can do. "If Cooper," said Balzac, "had succeeded in the painting of character to the same extent that he did in the painting of the phenomena of nature, he would have uttered the last word of our art."—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

#### THE WHOLESOMENESS OF COOPER'S NOVELS.

It is just to add one word which Cooper himself would have regarded as the highest tribute that could be paid to what he did. Whatever else we may say of his writings, their influence is always a healthy influence. Narrow and prejudiced he sometimes was in his opinions, but he hated whatever was mean and low in character. It is with beautiful things and with noble things that he teaches us to sympathise. Here are no incitements to passion, no prurient suggestions of sensual delights. The air which breathes through all his fictions is as pure as that which sweeps the streets of his mountain home. It is as healthy as nature itself. To read one of his best works after many of the novels of the day is like passing from the heated and stifling atmosphere of crowded rooms to the purity, the freedom, and the boundlessness of the forest.—PROF. THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY. (*Cf.* above.)

## **READERS' AND STUDENTS' NOTES.**

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1. Cooper's life will well repay studying in detail. The book to read—in fact, the only book there is to read (for when Cooper lay on his deathbed he enjoined upon his family to permit no authorised account of his life to be prepared)—is Lounsbury's "Life," in the "American Men of Letters" series. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.25.) But this work is one of the very best biographies in American literature. Its interest for the reader from first word to last is unflagging. It is a work of both ability and genius.

2. No American should be unacquainted with Cooper's best tales. These may be arranged in three groups:

(1) "The Spy."

(2) The sea-stories: (a) "The Pilot," (b) "The Red Rover," (c) "The Two Admirals."

(3) The "Leather-Stocking" series, which should be read in the following order: (a) "The Deerslayer," (b) "The Last of the Mohicans," (c) "The Pathfinder," (d) "The Pioneers," (e) "The Prairie."

3. Cooper's works are to be found in many forms, but the editions of the complete works that most people will care to have are those published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, especially the "Household Edition," to which "Introductions" are supplied by the author's daughter, Susan Fenimore Cooper. Editions of the more popular of the novels are also published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, and T. Y. Crowell & Co., New

York. An *édition de luxe* of the complete works is published by G. P. Putnam's Sons.

4. Perhaps the one book of Cooper's which best represents his genius is "The Last of the Mohicans." This has become a school classic. An excellent edition of "The Last of the Mohicans," got up for the special use of students, with biographical sketch, introduction, notes, and pronouncing vocabulary, is found in four numbers (95-98) of the "Riverside Literature Series," published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston (linen, 60 cents).

5. For a critical study of Cooper, full, thorough, discerning, and yet appreciative, the student is referred to the admirable chapter on "James Fenimore Cooper," in Prof. C. F. Richardson's "American Literature, 1607-1885," vol. ii. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 2 vols. in one, \$3.50.)

6. Further critical accounts of Cooper will be found as follows:

(1) In E. P. Whipple's "American Literature. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.)

(2) In Prof. Brander Matthews' "Americanisms and Britishisms."

(3) In Thackeray's "Roundabout Papers," under "A Peal of Bells."

7. An excellent reminiscent account of Cooper will be found, under the caption "A Glance Backward," in the *Atlantic Monthly* for February, 1887, written by Cooper's daughter, Susan Fenimore Cooper.

8. Upon the death of Cooper the poet Bryant was invited to deliver a "memorial oration." This address, delivered early the next year, inspired not alone by friendship, but by critical appreciation as well, was one of those remarkable oratorical efforts which, in the later years of the poet's life, gained for him the venerable title of the "Nestor of American Literature." The address will be found in the volume of Bryant's prose works entitled "Essays, Tales and Orations." (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 2 vols., \$6.00.)



**WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.**



# WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.


1794-1878.

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## *BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY.*

BY JOHN EBENEZER BRYANT.

OF all American poets and men of letters Bryant is the one that Americans rightly feel most pride in. He was our pioneer poet. That title to our love and esteem, however, is infinitely surpassed by others. His rank as a poet is intrinsically the very highest. As a poet of nature, and of reflection, and of ethical suggestion, he has had no superior, and almost no equal. His peculiar poetic gift, his poetic imagination, is of that swift and certain flight that only the very greatest sons of song can effect. Though he did not write much, or essay many themes, not a few of his poems are masterpieces that will live as long as any poems live. But it is not merely his worth as a poet that we take pride in. The character of the man, the work he did for purity, justice, uprightness, and truth, apart from his work as a poet, are even higher claims to our honour than his poetry. His life typified



everything that was best and most worthy of emulation in our development as a people. The aims he set before him, the means he took to achieve those aims, were the noblest, the purest, the most exalted possible. In all his life, in his actual achievement no less than in his genius and his ability, in his real intrinsic character no less than in his avowed principles and outward conduct, he was one whom the nation can justly honour, can point to with satisfaction as typical of the republic's best, can confidently hold up before the world as worthy the imitation, the emulation, the admiration of every one.

William Cullen Bryant was born in Cummington, Massachusetts, November 3, 1794. His father was Dr. Peter Bryant, a physician, whose father and grandfather had been physicians before him, and who, with them, was descended from a Stephen Bryant that had come over in the "Mayflower." His mother was Sarah Snell, daughter of Ebenezer Snell, who was descended from that John Alden and Priscilla, also of the "Mayflower" company, from whom Longfellow was descended. Dr. Peter Bryant was a noted man in his place and time, a public man, a medical teacher, and a scholar, and it was from him, no doubt, that the poet derived his ability and genius. Sarah Snell Bryant was a woman of character, and of piety and domestic worth, and the poet doubtless owed to her and to her influence many of his own sturdy and exemplary characteristics. The social and domestic environment of the poet in his youth was in every way conducive to earnestness of purpose, nobility of aim, and sobriety of conduct. The Bryant and Snell stock, and the Bryant and



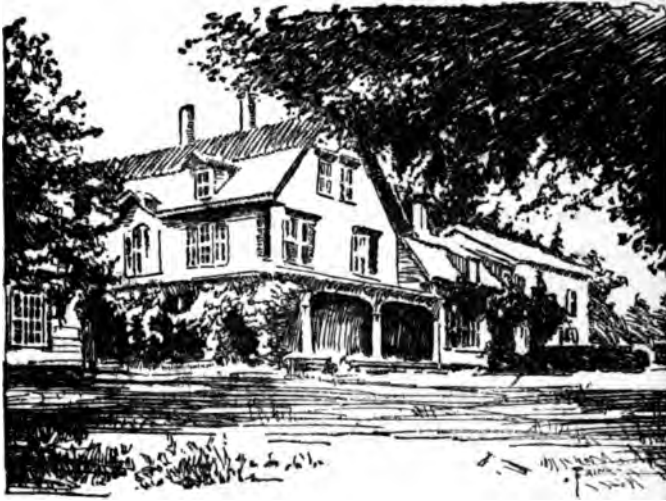
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.  
(From an early portrait.)



Snell household (for when the poet was five years old the households of the two families were united), were of the choicest and most praiseworthy New England type. And though New England has had many distinguished and noteworthy sons, none has more truly reflected her character, and all that it stands for in the character of the nation, than her first distinguished poet, William Cullen Bryant.

Bryant was a precocious child. Though puny in body, and delicate in bodily health, his head was large, his brain preternaturally active, and his mind mature far beyond his years. He learned Latin and Greek from his mother's brother, a clergyman, whose character had much influence in the development of his own, and also from another clergyman of equally remarkable force of character. All the influences that were about Bryant as a child and youth were both inspiring and wholesome. At the age of sixteen he entered Williams College; but, after attending Williams a year, he left it, intending to finish his college course at Yale. This last privilege, however, was denied him. His father's means could not afford it. Instead, therefore, of proceeding to a college degree, he returned to his father's house and read and studied by himself. He became well acquainted with English poetry, and, as his memory was remarkable both for its quickness and its retentiveness, his educational accomplishments were soon very extensive. At the age of seventeen he began the study of law. But his father's narrow means prevented him from studying law as he wished. He could pursue it only in a little country village near

home. When he was twenty-one he was licensed to practise. Once more, however, his honourable poverty stood in the way of his apparent advancement. He desired to settle in Boston, or some other important centre, and follow his profession where there would seem to be some hope of ultimately making a name for himself. This,



BRYANT'S HOME, CUMMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

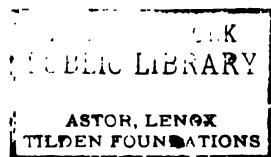
however, was impossible, and he made his home first in Plainfield, and afterward in a more important place, Great Barrington, on the banks of the Housatonic. At Great Barrington he remained until he finally decided to give up law for journalism (1825).

Bryant's abandonment of law for journalism was not the result of a sudden whim. He had become dissatisfied with law, and his dissatisfaction was founded on the basal



BRYANT AT HIS COUNTRY HOUSE AT ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND.

*From a photograph by W. H. Rau.*



principles of his character. His mind and heart were too intent on the pursuit of untrammelled truth to find pleasure in a profession where so often truth and justice, though ostensibly honoured as supreme, have to make compromise with expediency, and often, too, with downright error and wrong. Besides, the rough-and-tumble of a busy lawyer's life was alien to his tastes. He was retiring in his disposition, diffident in the expression of his views before others, disinclined to public argument, and, more than all, he longed for an occupation in which he could, at least, contend for right and truth, even if in the end he did not obtain them. His career as a lawyer was honourable, and, for a small town, successful. Had he continued in it, no doubt it would have become pre-eminently so. But he took no especial pride in it, and left it without regret.

Bryant's real ambition, not only as a youth and young man, but all through his course (if one so self-forgetting and uncalculating can be said to have had ambition), was to succeed as a poet, to be reckoned a poet, to produce things worthy of a poet. His whole life had its poetical side—its poetical half. And poetry was to him, even from the first, a great, an original, and, one might almost say, a perfect, endowment. From his very earliest years he wrote rhymes, and dreamed of writing poems. In his tenth year he received a gift from his grandfather for a rhymed version of a chapter in Job. In his thirteenth year he wrote a political satire of such point and pungency that his father had it published; and, moreover, it sold—sold to the last copy. When only seventeen years old he

wrote that poem ("Thanatopsis") for which even now he is best known, and which to all time will be, perhaps, his surest passport to poetic renown. When only twenty-one years old he wrote those lines, "To a Waterfowl," which many good judges all the world over consider rightfully enough to be one of the very best short poems in the language. Nor did his muse, who thus early showed her favours, ever neglect or slight him. To the last she was constant, true, and kind. Though he never transcended those youthful successes of his, yet he never, in all the poems he ever wrote, came much below them. His poetry, from beginning to end, from the first poem to the last, is marked by the same distinguishing qualities, by the same dignity, grace, force, and imaginative fervour which characterise his masterpieces. No poet that ever lived, not even Milton, ever produced a more uniformly even lot of admittedly first-class poems than he. But, then, it must be said that the total amount of his achievement is not large. It is not more than 13,000 lines in all. And that is not the only thing to be said *per contra*. A more serious objection is its restricted interest. His flight is high and sure, but it is almost always in one direction. Dignity, pathos, ethical reflection, keen appreciation of the beauty and charm of nature are always present. A fervid and potent imagination enshrines everything in the brilliancy, the charm, the sweet and delicious fragrance of a poetic atmosphere. But the oneness of the point of view, the sameness of the vision, the absence of humour, of dramatic interest, and, in great measure, also, of lyric beauty and power, are features and deficiencies

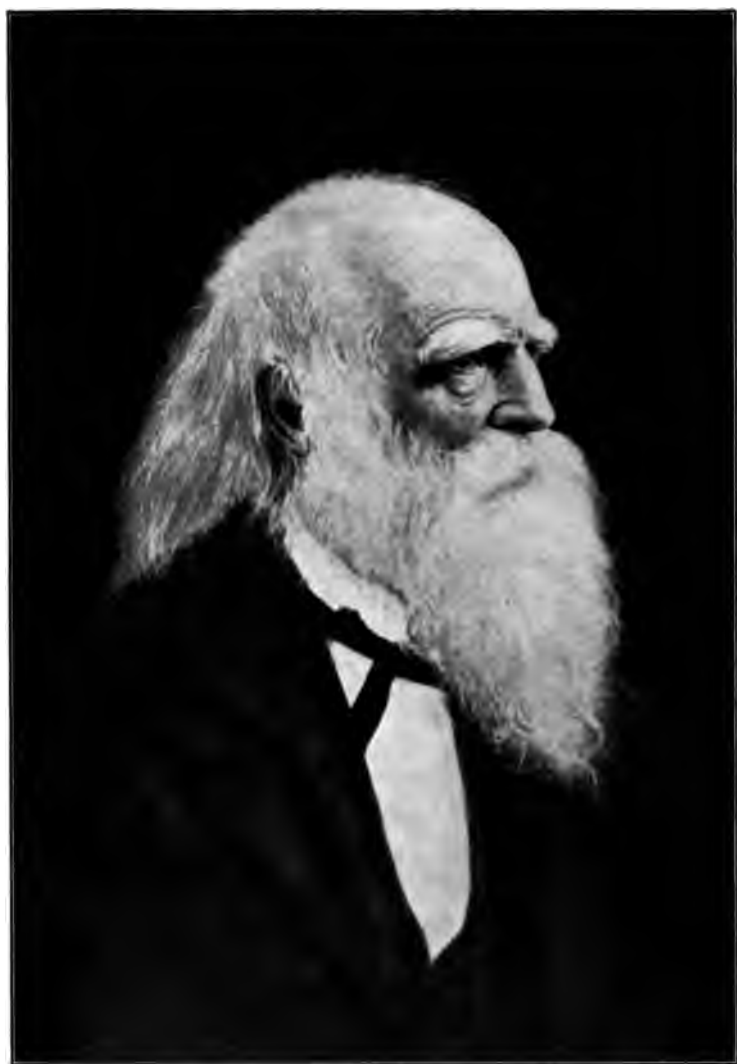
which will ever prevent Bryant's poetry—excellent in its one field as it undoubtedly is—from being ranked with that of the greatest masters of poesy, with, for example, that of Tennyson—or even Wordsworth.

"Thanatopsis" was published in the *North American Review*, September, 1817. It had been submitted to the editors of the *Review* by Dr. Bryant, who had found it among some papers in his son's desk—the son at that time being away from home engaged in his law business in Great Barrington. When Dr. Bryant found those now immortal lines in their original manuscript form, and saw that "they were Cullen's," he could not refrain from weeping, through parental pride and joy. They had been written some years before, in the summer of his eighteenth year, after he had left Williams, and before he had begun the study of law. So notable a poem had never before been written by one so young. When the editors of the *Review* first read it they thought that the fond father had in some way been deceived. "No one on this side of the Atlantic," they said, "is capable of writing such verse." When it was published the young author was at once recognised as the foremost poet of his country. The lines, "To a Waterfowl," appeared in the *Review* in 1818. From that time forward any poem that Bryant might have written would have been welcomed by every literary periodical in the country. But poetry was a poorly paid-for product in those callow days of the country's development; and when, a few years later, was published in another Boston magazine the now immortal masterpiece, beginning:

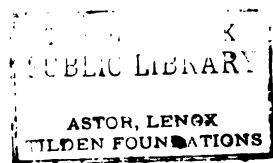
"The melancholy days have come,  
The saddest of the year——"

the sum of two dollars was all that its modest author felt warranted in asking for it. No wonder that Bryant used to say in after days that if he had kept to poetry as a means of earning a livelihood he would have starved. But the writing of poetry was to Bryant a vocation that he could not resist, and though he did not want to starve at it, neither did he want to continue at a profession which would so engross his energies, and absorb his interests, as to make the occasional indulgence of his passion impossible. Literature, of some sort, seemed to him his proper sphere, and so in 1825, when he was in his thirty-first year, having received an offer to become the editor of a monthly periodical in New York, entitled, the *New York Review and Athenæum Magazine*, he left Great Barrington for New York and entered upon his new profession. His salary was to be \$1,000 a year.

Bryant soon found that the periodical press of his day could afford him only an inadequate and very uncertain means of support. Upon coming to New York, therefore, he had almost at once to look about for a steadier and more remunerative employment. He thought he would find this in journalism proper, but a connection with a daily paper seemed to be beyond his reach. However, just when his circumstances were most desperate, and when he was about to decide to go back to law again, he was offered (in 1826) a position as assistant to the editor of the *New York Evening Post*. In 1829 he was pro-



*William Cullen Bryant*



moted to the chief editorship, and at the same time, through the help of a friend, he was able to buy a half-interest in the paper—to this end his friend lending him \$2,000. But though his position now seemed more secure, it still had much anxiety and uncertainty for him. Several times he was on the point of giving it up, and—abandoning journalism as he had done law—of leaving the East and trying his fortunes in a new field in the rich and mellow West. But he could never find a purchaser for his interest in the *Post*. His property in it was absolutely unsalable. Therefore, in spite of himself, he was forced to stick to his original venture. His work was very hard. His remuneration was very small. For twenty years he had only one assistant in the whole editorial conduct of the paper. For several years he was not able to bring his wife and child from their home in the country to live with him in the city. But, by and by, the tide turned. Hard work, ability, and character told. The *Post* became a paying property. The editor and co-proprietor began at last to be a “comfortable” man. He could go on long tours to Europe. He could buy country places for himself—the ancestral homes of his family. He could spend munificently in charity. And, when he died, the half-interest in his journal, which he had originally purchased for two or three thousand dollars, was worth close on to half a million.

Bryant’s editorial conduct of the *New York Evening Post* was an important factor in the literary, moral, and political development of the nation. He never forgot that he was an acknowledged representative of American let-

ters. His poetry had won for him a reputation that, although honourable, he considered exacting. He could not be indifferent to it. His editorial work, therefore, was always done with the utmost care. But the result was that he became a master in his profession. He became, in fact, one of the most readable, most forcible, most interesting, and most convincing, of American writers. But style, and finish, and accuracy of expression, remarkable as all these qualities were in his editorial output, were not the qualities that principally distinguished it. Its principal distinguishing quality was its moral earnestness. He strove to support principles, not to advance politicians. He combated error and wrong, not men. And he followed his convictions unflinchingly to their end, no matter where they led him. When his opposition to slavery cost him the loss of support of influential commercial interests, he witnessed the advertisements drop out from his paper, the names from his subscription list, without a tremor. When his advocacy of "sound money" alienated from him the sympathy of another set of patrons, he witnessed their desertion of his leadership with equal undismay. But in all and through all his character for sturdy honesty of opinion remained. Even when his paper was most unpopular because of its opinions, he himself was everywhere regarded as symbolical only of integrity, justice, and truth. And the whole nation honoured him, and put their faith in him, and felt proud of him. As Lincoln once said, it was "worth a journey across the continent to see such a man."

Bryant's sterling character was not a mere endowment

of nature. It was not a mere gift of fortune, like his genius. He was freighted with many of the failings and infirmities of our common humanity. He was very quick-tempered and irascible. But few ever saw him in anger, and then only under the provocation of injustice. He schooled his temper as he trained his body, and made it, by discipline, a steady force for the accomplishment of good, rather than a fitful power for evil. But Bryant's character was not wholly a matter of self-discipline. He acknowledged a higher spiritual power than his own, and lived conscious of the indwelling of that power within him. He was essentially a religious man. Even at the first, when religion and worship meant little more than the recognition of the beauty and sublimity of nature, he tuned his heart in concord with the divine, though unheard, music of the spheres. But as years went on, and his view of life and destiny became more intimate and studious, he more and more felt within his own soul the quickening influences of a spiritual power not his own, and his heart and mind became more and more alive to the beauty and grace of personal holiness. But he was no sectarian. It was not until his sixty-fourth year that he made a public profession of his faith and united himself with a church. And until the very last he supported to the best of his ability—no matter by what name it was called—whatever organised Christian effort came within the sphere of his social activities.

Bryant lived to a good old age. He was in his eighty-fourth year when he died, and to the very last he preserved almost unabated every one of his physical and mental

powers. Within the memory of all his friends and associates, within the memory almost of himself, he never had been seriously sick or ill a day. His eyesight was unimpaired. He never used spectacles. His hearing, too, was sound and perfect. His step was elastic and free. The carriage of his body was erect and notable. Every day that he was in the city he walked to and from his office and his house—a distance of three miles each way—no matter what the weather was. Even when well on in his ninth decade, he could outwalk most men of middle life, and beat them easily in hill-climbing or other similar exercise. But this bodily and mental vigour was not got without effort—without painstaking and persistent effort, characteristic of both the strength and steadfastness of the will-power of the man. He rose every day at five, sometimes at half-past four, and spent from an hour to an hour and a half at gymnastic effort. Dumb-bells, a pole, a horizontal bar, and a light chair to swing round his head, constituted his apparatus. To use his own words, his exercises were “designed to expand the chest and call into action all the muscles and articulations of the body.” That they efficiently accomplished their design, not only the almost unexampled preservation of his physical powers to extreme old age, but also the fact that in youth he had been of puny stature and weak constitution, and was inclined also to be consumptive, are ample proof. The good effect of his physical regimen he supplemented by a careful regimen in his diet. He ate sparingly of meat and fish, but, instead, ate plentifully of fruit. His principal foods, however, were the cereals and vegetables.



BRYANT'S LIBRARY AT CEDARHURST, ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND.



He never drank tea, or coffee, or any other stimulant, except, very occasionally, a very little wine. He had nothing to do with tobacco in any form except, as he said, "to quarrel with its use." He never did his editorial work at his house, nor would he allow business or professional cares to engage his mind or attention there. He passed many hours in the open air, and took much interest in, and spent much time and labour upon, his farm and his garden, especially upon his fruit trees, shade trees, shrubs, and flowers. Finally, he was in bed and asleep every night at ten.

The last twenty or more years of Bryant's life were full of honour and full of peace. One great sorrow he had, however—the loss of his wife, who, in 1866, died, after having been his best-loved companion, his most intimate and dearest friend, his chief literary adviser, for forty-five years. In 1864, on the completion of his seventieth year, he was tendered a public dinner, at which addresses were made, or poems read, or testimonials given, by the leading authors and artists of the country. In 1874, on the completion of his eightieth year, a still more pleasing function was held in his honour. This time its proportions were almost national. Bryant had won, in his later years, honour and fame, and a reputation for good, sound scholarship, and, what was more, had earned a goodly sum of money, by his poetic translations of Homer's "Iliad" and Odyssey"—translations among the very best in the language. Among the gifts to him on his eightieth birthday was a superb vase, which, after the manner of Greek art, was ornamented with sculptured

reliefs commemorative of his life and work. Eighty years old, as he was, he still seemed to be in his prime. He was still the nation's chosen representative at every function where American genius, ability, and character were desired to be shown at their best. On May 29, 1878, he accepted the honour of unveiling a statue to Mazzini, the Italian patriot, in Central Park. His discourse, on the occasion, was one of the best and most entertaining he ever made, and he was an effective and accomplished orator. But the day was hot, and the sun's strength proved too much for him. On entering a friend's house, when the festivity was over, he fell speechless in the doorway. For nearly two weeks more he remained corporally existent, but he had practically ended his life in the moment of his fall. Its end was, perhaps, as he would have wished it. The wheels of his being had gone on perfect in their revolution till they had stopped forever. He breathed his last on June 12. New York—in fact, the whole nation—would proudly have honoured his remains with a public funeral; but, in accordance with his own well-known sentiments in such matters, the ceremony that was held was as private and unostentatious as well could be.

## REMINISCENCES AND CRITICAL STUDIES.

### SELECTED

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#### THE WRITING AND PUBLICATION OF "THANATOPSIS."

EARLY in the summer of 1817 a package of manuscript poems was left at the office of the *North American Review*, without their author's name or any intimation of their real parentage. In due time they found their way into the hands of Mr. William Phillips, one of the editors of the *Review*, to whom they were addressed.

No sooner had he finished their perusal—such is the tradition—than he seized his hat and set out in hot haste for Cambridge, to submit them to his editorial colleagues, Richard H. Dana and Edward T. Channing, who, with Mr. Phillips, constituted the editorial trinity to whom the management of the *Review* was then confided.

They listened while the manuscript was read, and what little was known of its history was recapitulated to them. "Ah, Phillips," said Dana at last, his face breaking the while into a skeptical smile, "you have been imposed upon. No one on this side of the Atlantic is capable of writing such verse."

The verses which had produced such a fluttering among the presiding justices of our highest literary tribunal in those days were not an imported article, still less the work of any American literary notability of the period, but of a country lad of only seventeen years, residing at Cummington, in the western part of Massachusetts, who had never been out of his native county in his life. One of the poems was entitled "Thanatopsis." It appeared in the September number of the *North American Review* for 1817, and proved to be not only the finest poem which had yet been produced on this continent, but one of the most remarkable poems ever produced at such an early age, and a poem which would have added to the fame of almost any poet of any age, while it would have detracted from the fame of none.

From the day this poem appeared, the name of its author, which till then had scarcely been heard farther from home than the range of the human voice, was classed among the most cherished literary assets of the nation. Young William Cullen Bryant, before he was out of his teens, had established himself as the undisputed laureate of America.<sup>1</sup>—JOHN BIGELOW, in "*William Cullen Bryant*," in "*American Men of Letters*" series (Hou.).

<sup>1</sup> "Thanatopsis" appeared in the September number of the *North American Review* for 1817. "It was written by Bryant," Mr. Godwin tells us, "shortly after he was withdrawn from college, while residing with his parents at Cummington in the summer of 1811, and before he had attained his eighteenth year."

## HOW POVERTY WON BRYANT TO POETRY.

The measure of poverty which recalled Bryant from college, which shut out from his gaze the great world and the expanded life about which he had read in his books, which condemned him to the "peasant's toil" on his father's farm, and the sequestered life of his native village, drove him early

"To quiet valley and shaded glen  
And forest and meadow and slope of hill,"

where his teeming fancy constructed a world more to his taste—a world which expanded with his years, and in which he was destined to pass the happiest and by far the largest portion of his life. Let the aspiring lad who drags the chain of poverty, and who sighs for the opportunities which wealth alone confers, consider that those who have such opportunities pretty uniformly dwell in houses made with hands, and know nothing of the cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces which the imagination provides so generously for the gifted poor. Hence, perhaps, it is that great poets are so scarce who in their early years have been swathed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.—JOHN BIGELOW. (*Cf.* above.)

## HOW THE "LINES TO A WATERFOWL" WAS WRITTEN.

When Bryant journeyed on foot over the hills to Plainfield on the 15th of December, 1816, to see what induce-

ments it offered him to commence there the practice of the profession to which he had just been licensed, he says in one of his letters that he felt "very forlorn and desolate." The world seemed to grow bigger and darker as he ascended, and his future more uncertain and desperate. The sun had already set, leaving behind it one of those brilliant seas of chrysolite and opal which often flood the New England skies, and, while pausing to contemplate the rosy splendour, with rapt admiration, a solitary bird made its winged way along the illuminated horizon. He watched the lone wanderer until it was lost in the distance. He then went on with new strength and courage. When he reached the house where he was to stop for the night he immediately sat down and wrote the lines "To a Waterfowl," the concluding verse of which will perpetuate to future ages the lesson in faith which the scene had impressed upon him.

"He who, from zone to zone,  
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,  
In the long way that I must tread alone  
Will lead my steps aright."

Bryant was only twenty-one years of age when he wrote this poem, which by many is thought to be the one they would choose to preserve, if all but one of his poems were condemned to destruction.—JOHN BIGELOW.

## BRYANT'S FACILITY FOR ACQUIRING LANGUAGES.

By some process as mysterious as the leafing of the forests or the swelling of the tides, Bryant managed to make himself familiar with most of the languages of the world that had a literature. Like Sir Henry Wotton—

“So many languages had he in store  
That only fame could speak of him in more.”

Besides an acquaintance with the Greek and Latin tongues, which many who have made these studies a specialty might have envied, he had a critical knowledge of German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and modern Greek, to which, during his travels in the East, he added more than a smattering of Arabic. When it is borne in mind that he acquired them all in the leisure economised from one of the most unrelenting professions, we can realise the amazing faculty, the high discipline, and admirable husbandry of time and force which enabled him, like Ulysses, “to do so many things so well.”—JOHN BIGELOW.

## HOW BRYANT CAME TO TRANSLATE HOMER.

It is with poets as with other men. When they are old they shall stretch forth their hands and another shall gird them. It was Bryant's choice, not unnaturally, when the time came for him to be girded to choose one of his own kind to gird him; to supply him with the invention and the thoughts for which he should only be required to

supply the raiment. In the fall of 1863, a translation of some passages from the fifth book of the "Odyssey," with which he had been amusing himself, appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. The reception it met with from scholars as well as poets was so encouraging that he tried his hand with some passages of the "Iliad." The death of Mrs. Bryant in the summer of 1866 increased his indisposition for severe work and his need for distracting employment. The translations from Homer answered this purpose so well that he finally resolved to translate the whole of the "Iliad." He sailed on his sixth voyage to Europe in October of that year with a copy of Homer in his pocket, and a fixed purpose of rendering at least forty lines of the old Greek into English every day. He frequently exceeded this number, and, as he became inured to the work, not unfrequently increased the number to seventy-five. This was his early morning work, and even after his return he never allowed his task of translating to interfere with his customary professional avocations.—JOHN BIGELOW.

#### THE MERIT OF THE TRANSLATION OF HOMER.

The reception of Bryant's Homer by his country people could not have been more cordial. Every one seemed proud of it. The conviction rapidly took possession of the scholarly public that the old Greek had never before been brought so near to readers of English, and that our literature had been permanently and substantially enriched. Neither of these convictions is likely to be

shaken. No scholar has made the criticism of Bryant's Homer that Bentley made of Pope's.<sup>1</sup> While giving his readers the genuine spirit of Homer, Bryant has also given them one of the finest specimens of pure Saxon English in our literature.—JOHN BIGELOW.

BRYANT'S "MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO."

Bryant was not a man of moods and tenses. He never seemed one day less ready than another for any kind of intellectual exertion. Till years began to tell upon his nervous energy, which was not until very late in life, he seemed always ready to do his best of any kind of work. This is so rare a quality that it can only be explained by the pains he took for the conservation of his health and the religious control which he maintained over all his appetites. Like St. Paul, he treated his body as God's temple, and, to an almost inconceivable extent, resisted every inclination tending to unfit it for its holy office.—JOHN BIGELOW. (*Cf.* above.)

BRYANT'S PERSONALITY AND HABITS.

Bryant was about five feet ten inches in height, very erect, lithe, and well formed. He never became fleshy, but to the last retained the elasticity and alertness which in the lower animals are tokens of high breeding and careful training. He was among his school-fellows noted for his beauty, and in his old age his appearance was very

<sup>1</sup> "A pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer."

distinguished. A finer-looking head than his at eighty was only to be seen in art galleries. Whoever saw him in his later years would discern a new force and fitness in those lines of Dr. Donne:

"No spring nor summer beauty has such grace  
As I have seen in an autumnal face."

The austerity of his life, for he never cultivated any artificial appetites, contributed to keep him comparatively lean in flesh. Hence his endurance even at eighty was remarkable. There were few young men who cared to follow him in his tramps, or who could scale a mountain with less physical inconvenience. He was not fond of riding, and was rarely seen in a carriage for recreation. I never knew of his riding a horse. Walking was his favourite out-of-door exercise. He was a great favourite with ladies and with children, and had the rare art of entertaining them without seeming to descend for the purpose. He never indulged in chaff or persiflage, nor in jokes at others' expense.—JOHN BIGELOW.

#### BRYANT'S MARVELLOUS MEMORY.

Bryant had a marvellous memory. His familiarity with the English poets was such that when at sea, where he was always too ill to read much, he would beguile the time by reciting to himself page after page from favourite poems. He assured me that he had never made a voyage long enough to exhaust his resources. I once proposed to send for a copy of a magazine in which a new poem of his

was announced to appear. "You need not send for it," said he, "I can give it to you." "Then you have a copy with you?" said I. "No," he replied, "but I can recall it," and thereupon proceeded immediately to write it out. I congratulated him upon having such a faithful memory. "If allowed a little time," he replied, "I could recall every line of poetry I have ever written."—JOHN BIGELOW.

## BRYANT'S TASTES IN READING.

Bryant rated his memory at its true value and never abused it. It was a blooded steed which he never degraded to the uses of a pack-horse. Hence he was fastidious about his reading as about his company, believing there was no worse thief than a bad book; but he never tired of writers who have best stood the test of time. He had little taste for historical reading. Indeed, the habits of his mind were not at all in sympathy with the inductive method of reaching new truths or propagating them. He often deplored the increasing neglect of the old English classics, which our modern facilities for printing were displacing. Johnson's "Lives of the Poets" was one of his favourite books. Pope, who has educated more poets in the art of verse-making than any other modern author, was, from early youth, his pocket companion. I think he had studied him more carefully than any other English writer, and was especially impressed by his wit.—JOHN BIGELOW.

## BRYANT'S DAILY PRAYER.

Bryant left this world with no wish or ambition unsatisfied. Life to him had been in no sense a disappointment. He had never allowed himself to desire what it did not please the Master to send to him, nor to repine for anything that was denied him. "Thy will be done" had been the daily prayer, not only of the lips but of his heart and life.—JOHN BIGELOW. (*Cf.* above.)

## BRYANT'S CHARACTER—HIS AMERICANISM.

There is probably no eminent man in the country upon whose life and genius and career the verdict of his fellow-citizens would be more immediate and unanimous. Bryant's character and life had a simplicity and austerity of outline that had become universally familiar, like a neighbouring mountain or the sea. His convictions were very strong, and his temper uncompromising; he was independent beyond most Americans. He was an editor and a partisan; but he held politics and all other things subordinate to the truth and the common welfare; and his earnestness and sincerity and freedom from selfish ends took the sting of personality from his opposition, and constantly placated all who, like him, sought lofty and virtuous objects. . . . This same bent of nature showed itself in the character of his verse. His poetry is intensely and distinctively American. He was a man of scholarly accomplishment, familiar with other languages

and literature. But there is no tone or taste of anything that is not purely American in his poetry. It is as characteristic as the wine of the Catawba grape, and could have been written only in America, by an American naturally sensitive to whatever is most distinctively American.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, in the "*Commemorative Address*," delivered before the New York Historical Society, 1878.

"THANATOPSIS."

"Thanatopsis" is a Saxon and New England poem. Its view of death reflects the race characteristics of ten centuries. It shows "no trace of age, no fear to die." Its morality and its trust are ethnic rather than Christian. It nowhere expresses that belief in personal immortality which the author possessed and elsewhere stated. It is a piece of verse of which any language or age might be proud. Yet, this strong and serene utterance of philosophy and of poetry, expressed in the best blank verse of the period, came from a mere boy.—PROF. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON, in "*American Literature, 1607-1885*" (Put.).

BRYANT THE GRAY OF HIS COUNTRY AND AGE.

It is not necessarily an arraignment of a man of genius to declare that he did not and could not do this or that thing. That Bryant was unable to produce an epic, a drama, a strong delineation of the heroic character, a bril-

liant lyric of patriotism or passion, a poem instinct with daring imagination, was not necessarily to the discredit of his powers. *Non omnia possumus omnes.*<sup>1</sup> His place was with Gray, not with Milton, Goethe, Browning, or Burns. Intense power was not his, nor broad creative range, nor soaring vision; his marks were thoughtfulness and serenity.—PROF. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON. (*Cf.* above.)

#### BRYANT AND EMERSON AND WASHINGTON.

The chief of our poets of meditation, based upon observation, are Bryant and Emerson, but between the prevalent attitude of Bryant and that of Emerson is this difference: Bryant's is that of solemn acceptance of the existent order, Emerson's that of optimistic faith in that order. Bryant as surely avoids the effect of gloom as Emerson avoids that of gayety. When Bryant was more than eighty years of age, in the very year of his death, he wrote of Washington:

"Lo! where, beneath an icy shield,  
Calmly the mighty Hudson flows!  
By snow-clad fell and frozen field,  
Broadening, the lordly river goes.

The wildest storm that sweeps through space,  
And rends the oak with sudden force,  
Can raise no ripple on his face,  
Or slacken his majestic course.

<sup>1</sup> "We cannot all do all things."

Thus, mid the wreck of thrones, shall live,  
Unmarred, undimmed, our hero's fame,  
And years succeeding years shall give  
Increase of honours to his name."

There was something in Bryant's mind that was akin to Washington's; this steady flow of thought and purpose, beneath a calm exterior, untossed by storm or passion, marks Bryant's poetical work from the first.—PROF. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON.

## MATTHEW ARNOLD'S PRAISE OF BRYANT.

Once when the late Matthew Arnold, with his family, was visiting the ever-hospitable country home of Mr. Charles Butler, I happened to spend an evening there. In the course of it Mr. Arnold took up a volume of Mr. Bryant's poems from the table, and turning to me, said: "This is *the* American poet, *facile princeps*"; and after a pause he continued: "When I first heard of him, Hartley Coleridge<sup>1</sup> (we were both lads then) came into my father's<sup>2</sup> house one afternoon considerably excited, and exclaimed: 'Mat, do you want to hear the best short poem in the English language?' 'Faith, Hartley, I do,' was my reply. He then read a poem 'To a Waterfowl' in his best manner. And he was a good reader. As soon as he had done he asked: 'What do you think of that?' 'I am not sure but you are right, Hartley; is that your father's?' was my reply. 'No,' he rejoined; 'father has

<sup>1</sup> Son of Coleridge the poet—himself a poet.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Arnold of Rugby, the celebrated schoolmaster.

written nothing like that.' Some days after he might be heard muttering to himself:

" 'The desert and illimitable air,  
Lone wandering, but not lost.' "

—*From a letter written by Parke Godwin, Bryant's biographer, to John Bigelow. Quoted by Mr. Bigelow in his "William Cullen Bryant," in the "American Men of Letters" series.*

## *READERS' AND STUDENTS' NOTES.*

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1. Bryant's best poems have been "household words" with most Americans now for two generations. But a younger generation, just for lack of proper introduction, may, unfortunately, omit to read them. This would be a national loss. The "Lines to a Waterfowl" should be known by heart by every one. The "Death of the Flowers" is equally well worthy of memorising. "Thanatopsis" should be handed on from generation to generation as one of the most precious of national heirlooms. Other beautiful poems with which every one ought to be familiar are "To the Evening Wind," "The Forest Hymn," "The Battlefield," "The Prairies," "The Yellow Violet," "To the Fringed Gentian," "The Antiquity of Freedom," "The Flood of Years," and "June." "Oh, Fairest of the Rural Maids" was addressed to his wife. The "Hymn to Death" was written on the death of his father. (The "Death of the Flowers" was written in memory of a much-loved sister who died at the age of twenty-two of consumption.) Beautiful poems for young people are "Robert of Lincoln," "Sella," and "Little People of the Snow." One of the poems that helped to make him famous was "The Ages," which was read before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard in 1822, in his twenty-eighth year. Patriotic poems are "Seventy-six," "O Mother of a Mighty Race," "The Twenty-second of February," "The Death of Lincoln," and "The Song of Marion's Men." Other notable poems are "Inscription for

an Entrance to a Wood," "The Future Life," "Summer Wind," "Autumn Woods," "The Voice of Autumn," "The Painted Cup," "To a Cloud," "October," "November," and "Life."

2. The standard life of Bryant is that by his son-in-law, Mr. Parke Godwin. Besides the biography proper, the work contains extracts from the poet's correspondence. (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 2 vols, \$6.00.)

3. Many people, however, would like to read a shorter biography than that of Mr. Godwin. A very good biography is that by Bryant's friend and former associate on the *Evening Post*, Hon. John Bigelow. Mr. Bigelow's work is one of the excellent "American Men of Letters" series. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.25.)

4. "William Cullen Bryant: A Biographical Sketch, with Selections from his Poems and Other Writings," is the title of an excellent brief account of the poet's life and work written by James Andrew Symington. The distinguishing characteristic of this "life-sketch," as the author calls it, is the large number of illustrative passages quoted from the writings or speeches of Bryant's friends, such as Parke Godwin, John Bigelow, George William Curtis, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Richard Henry Stoddard, Richard Henry Dana, President Mark Hopkins, Dr. Ray Palmer, General James Grant Wilson, etc. The work also contains a very good account of Bryant's writings, with many illustrative selections.

5. Mr. Parke Godwin, besides being the editor of Bryant's "Life," is also the editor of the following:

(1) The standard edition of Bryant's "Poems." (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 2 vols., \$6.00.)

(2) The standard edition of Bryant's "Prose Writings," consisting of essays, tales, orations, travels, and addresses. (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 2 vols., \$6.00.)

6. Messrs. Appleton & Co. publish other and lower-priced editions of Bryant's "Poems" (in their complete form), and also Bryant's "Letters from Spain and Other Countries." They also

publish "The Song of the Sower," "The Story of the Fountain," "The Little People of the Snow," and a "Bryant Birthday Book" as illustrated gift-books.

7. Bryant's translations of Homer's "Iliad" and Homer's "Odyssey" are works which should be possessed by every person of culture. Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. of Boston are the publishers of these. There are several editions, but the "Students'," at \$1.00 each translation, is especially commendable.

8. Bryant's "Early Poems"—these indeed comprising most of the poet's best work—are published in many forms by many publishers. In especial may be mentioned several dainty editions issued by T. Y. Crowell & Co.

9. For students, an especially valuable edition of "Thanatopsis," "Sella," and others of Bryant's best poems is found in No. 54 of the "Riverside Literature Series," published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. (15 cents.)

10. For a sound and just critical estimate of Bryant's poetry, the student should read the chapter on Bryant in Edmund Clarence Stedman's "Poets of America." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$2.25.) Prof. Charles F. Richardson's critical estimate of Bryant in his excellent "American Literature, 1607-1880" is also very deserving of careful study. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 2 vols. in one, \$3.50.)

11. Further critical and reminiscent accounts of Bryant will be found as follows:

(1) In George William Curtis' "Address Before the New York Historical Society," printed in vol. iii. of his "Orations and Addresses." (New York: Harper & Brothers. 3 vols. \$3.50 a vol.)

(2) In General James Grant Wilson's "Bryant and His Friends."

(3) In E. P. Whipple's "Literature and Life." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.)

(4) In E. P. Whipple's "American Literature and Other Papers." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.)

(5) In Bayard Taylor's "Critical Essays and Literary Notes."

(6) In Charles D. Deshler's "Afternoons with the Poets."

(7) In Caroline M. Kirkland's "Bryant," in "Little Journeys to the Homes of American Authors," edited by Elbert Hubbard. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$1.75.)

(8) In H. N. Powers' "William Cullen Bryant," in *Scribner's Magazine*, August, 1878 (illustrated).

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.



# RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

1803-1882.

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## *BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY.*

BY JOHN EBENEZER BRYANT.

EMERSON is the chief of American men of letters. In the world's estimate of American literature his writings stand first and preëminent. He holds this position by virtue of characteristics that bring him into comparison with the world's greatest and best. In suggestiveness and impressiveness as a teacher of ethical truth he has no superior and no equal. Nearly every sentence that he wrote comes to us as an' ethical inspiration. In nearly every word that he uttered we feel the impress of a personality that was in its character a near realisation of the noble ethical ideal upon which it was consciously modelled. But this ethical ideal was also an intellectual one. The mind, with its activities, is the entire man; and the mind in its highest and purest state of enjoyment is the highest ethical existence. But though such was, in simple, the Emersonian doctrine, its continuous and suc-

cessful inculcation during many years was but a small part of Emerson's achievement. Emerson was America's first great original intellectual force. He was the asserter of America's intellectual independence, the quickener of her intellectual action, the inspirer of her intellectual aims, the moulder of her intellectual ideals. Other writers may have contributed toward these ends. But it was Emerson's independent and assertive originality that was the mainspring, in American literature, of its national unity and characteristic individuality.

Emerson is a teacher for the young, the enthusiastic, the impressionable, the hopeful, the optimistic. Enthusiasm, hope, and the belief that the world is a good world, were with him undying characteristics. His writings are inspirations. They are full of heat, and light, and life. They are living forces impelling toward positive ethical and intellectual accomplishment. They are also unveilings of an ideal world, where all may enter if we only will, the condition being simply a pure and upright intellectuality. He takes into account all the old-time virtues, but shows that to worthily practise them, and to be happy in them, one must have a mind attuned to all noble influences—poetry, eloquence, music, art, etc.—as well as religion. His ethical doctrine, therefore, appeals to all our higher faculties; he would enlist every one of them in the service of his ideal life. While, therefore, he cannot be said to be in full accord with the ordinarily accepted ethics of society, neither does he go counter to them. He supplements them by adding to them ideals which the ordinary ethical teacher loses sight of. His doctrine, however, is

not wrought out into a logical system. It appeals to our intuition, to be accepted or rejected by us as we will. It lacks definiteness and constructive arrangement. It never, however, pretended to be a systematic philosophy. Like all great ethical teachers, Emerson believed in revelation; and his own teaching was the revelation to him of what he would call the "over-soul"—that is, of some power or influence above him and about him that impelled him to utter what he did. He made no elaborate definition of this over-soul. He rarely referred to it. But to him it was the all-powerful power that made for righteousness; and he heeded it as best he could. He believed that if others heeded it they would acknowledge the truth of what he had to say, so far as truth was in it, and he therefore took no trouble with logical proof. This was the secret of his influence, especially as a *viva-voce* teacher. Every word that he uttered came from his heart. Every sentence that he breathed was as the breath of a new life to him that received it. And this again was the secret of his special influence with the young, the enthusiastic, the hopeful. These, wedded to no preconceived ideals, burdened by no logically proved systems, heard his words with gladness, and also accepted them as messages from a power which makes for righteousness.

Emerson was a patriot and an American, but neither patriotism nor Americanism was the special object of his teaching. The cardinal fact of his great message was the inherent right of every being to be free and independent in his intellectual life. He was, however, no vague, cosmopolitan dreamer. If the individual is to be free,

so must also be the nation and the age. "Our own millions cannot be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests." "Each age must write its own books. The books of an older period will not fit this." Whenever, therefore, the time seemed appropriate to him to voice a national sentiment, Emerson's words of patriotism had all the greater effect because of their unwontedness. His oration, "The American Scholar" (Harvard, 1837), was accepted practically as a national declaration of literary independence: "We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. A nation of men can exist only when each man believes himself inspired by the divine soul which also inspires all other men." Another address, "Man the Reformer" (four years later), was equally emphatic in its assertion of the need of a self-sufficing national spirit: "The Americans have many virtues, but they have not faith and hope." But without faith in themselves, and hope in themselves, how could a people be a nation? How his words, therefore, must have vivified the nascent spirit of the people! He also was one of the first practically to show how the national faith could be inspired. Were not the deeds of the early patriots as lustrous as any recorded in history—as, for example, that on Concord Bridge, where, as in his own inspiring words—

". . . once the embattled farmers stood  
And fired the shot heard round the world" ?

But when he felt it necessary to impress upon the nation a great moral principle that needed national application,



*R. Waldo Emerson*



none knew better than he how to put his thought into words that would sink into the hearts of the people—as, for example, in his “Boston Hymn” (January 1, 1863):

“Pay ransom to the owner,  
And fill the bag to the brim.  
Who is the owner? The slave is owner,  
And ever was. Pay him.”

Emerson's style as a writer was an all-powerful factor in his influence as a teacher. It had two unique features that conduced to its effectiveness. Considered merely as grammatical compositions, his sentences were simple, direct, and plain, as if they had been written for a primer for children. Subject, verb, complement, and object were arranged in an almost unvarying order. He used few adjectives or other qualifiers, and those of the superlative degree he almost shunned. The simplest words, the simplest arrangement of his words—this was his almost invariable rule. But this grammatical simplicity was only the harmony of the external expression with the informing idea. Emerson's thinking found its most appropriate embodiment in individual sentences. Each of his sentences contained its own thought, and that thought was a complete whole. He rarely elaborated his sentences into effective paragraphs, or his paragraphs into logically constructed chapters. His own description of his sentences was almost literally true: “Each an infinitely repellent particle.” But, though to arrange his sentences into logical paragraphs and chapters seemed to be beyond his art, upon the sentences themselves he spent

such pains that each became the perfection of art. But their perfection was their simplicity, their directness, their lucidity. And each, as said before, was the embodiment in itself of an entire and self-sufficing thought. But the lucidity of the sentence was only one feature of the effectiveness of his style. The other was its realism; its concreteness. He rarely concerned himself with mere ideas or abstractions. He proves the general proposition by giving some objective illustration of it, or by stating some elementary truth as an analogy. His writing, therefore, abounds in anecdotal instances and in aphorisms. Indeed, his whole style is anecdotal and aphoristic. He is the most quotable of authors. An essay of his, or a lecture, may be begun anywhere and ended anywhere. So, though of course in less degree, may any of his poems. But far from this being a weakness, it is a strength. It makes his writing of universal and enduring interest. Emerson will live in literature as long as will Bacon or Montaigne.

Emerson was not a scholar, as English and German scholarship goes, and it has been the pitiful performance of many critics to take pains to point out to what degree of remissness his scholarship was deficient. He read neither Latin nor Greek with ease, nor even French or German. His knowledge of history or metaphysics was neither exact nor philosophical. With mathematics or the modern sciences he had but the most superficial acquaintance. And yet no writer of this century ever laid the literature of Greece or Rome, or of the modern foreign world, under more unceasing contribution to his



*Emerson in Middle Life*

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store of facts and ideas. And in the sciences, too, he often finds the most apposite analogies to illustrate and exemplify the ethical truths and laws that he wishes to establish. But Emerson read the most of his ancient and foreign literature in translations, and sensibly took pride in the fact that it was a wise and proper thing so to do. "As soon should I think of swimming across the Charles River to go to Boston as of reading books in originals when I have them rendered for me in the mother tongue." What he sought in his reading was neither the form nor the fact, but the quickening idea; and the idea, he rightly knew, retained its vivifying life no matter in what outer covering of language it might for the time being be enwrapped. The quickening ideas thus sought for in the literatures of all ages and all peoples he put to soil again, and lo, they brought forth other seed! But how abundant, varied, rich, and fruitful, the new seed was! In the works of no other writer, living or dead, may one gather so easily and so abundantly a harvest of quickening ideas as in the best works of Emerson.

Emerson's personal character was as unique and exalted as was his character as a writer. It was an ideal realisation of the refined, the dignified, the courteous, the gentle, the sincere, the upright. Every one loved him, and every one felt happy and at ease in his presence; and yet no one ever ventured to be unduly familiar with him, or to treat him in any way but with respectful honour. The serenity of his philosophical belief seemed to have embodied itself in his natural behaviour, and as he moved about in the world it was as if there were in-

dwelling in him the divinity of some higher and superior life. His conversation was always set toward thoughtful ends. He sought neither to amuse nor to be amused; nor, indeed, specially to instruct or to be instructed; but rather to give or to receive back some seed of that divine wisdom which he conceived it to be the special function of culture to keep alive and to propagate. It was the fructifying idea that alone had masterful interest for him. And yet, withal, his delicate humour was the unfailing delight of those who were privileged to meet him in familiar colloquy; and no man was ever more glad to learn some new fact of knowledge, provided only he could in any degree see its relationship to the world's amelioration. But the great charm of his manner was its perfect urbanity. With the strength of the utmost masculinity of judgment he had also the deference, the courtesy, the gentle winsomeness, of a refined and cultured woman, the humility and the attractive *naïveté* of a child. He was thus a man whose society was sought for and enjoyed by both learned and unlearned; but when chance threw him among those whose opportunities for culture and enlightenment had not been improved he could unmistakably, though silently, show his righteous disdain. Neither scholarship nor social position could excite his interest or win his appreciation if it were unable to afford him an exchange of fertilising ideas.

Emerson was a tall, spare man, with the small, thin hands and pale face and brow of a scholar. His head was not large, but it was high and intellectual-looking. His hair was soft, abundant, and of a lustrous brown.



His eyes were of a blue so clear and deep that they were almost matchless. His nose was of New England's most genuine accipitrine. His lips, thin and refined-looking, often assumed a grave but pleasing smile, but they rarely broke into laughter. Mental strength and physical delicacy, moral dignity and social graciousness, were the unmistakable revelation of every lineament of his features. In physique he certainly was not strong. But his habits were very regular. He rose at six; he went to bed at ten. He took his daily walk at four. So that despite his constitutional lack of robustness he rarely missed his full day's work. He had no knack for mechanical contrivance or manual labour. He could not use even so simple a tool as the spade. "Look out, papa, you will dig your leg!" was the ejaculation of one of his children when once he attempted to lift some mould in his garden. He used to confess that he could not drive a nail into a shingle without splitting it in four ways! Dexterity of any sort seemed to be denied him. When he stood up to lecture it was always the fear of his friends that he would lose the sheets of his manuscript and be unable to proceed. When the "Boston Hymn" was read at the Music Hall in Boston, New Year's Day, 1863, every leaf of it fluttered from his fingers before he had uttered a word. The papers of his poems, when he sometimes brought them to his friends to be read before publication, would be found to be amusingly mixed and confused. Nor in such a simple matter as that of account-keeping was he more of an adept. He added, subtracted, and multiplied, with difficulty. And yet, in the essentials of

things, no man ever had more downright practical common sense. His own finances were always managed prudently and economically. And, when he undertook to look after the publication in America of some of Carlyle's books, every detail of the business, though such matters were always irksome and difficult to him, was attended to with the most scrupulous exactness.

Outside of his own immediate personal concerns, Emerson's friendship with Carlyle was the great fact of his life. He visited Carlyle at his home in Craigenputtock during his first visit to England in 1833. To the Scottish philosopher that visit was as of "a sky-messenger who alighted to him from the Desert and then vanished into the Blue again." In 1847 he visited him again at Chelsea. In 1834 they began their famous correspondence, an interchange of thought and idea, as well as of friendship, which lasted until Emerson's third visit to England in 1873. In 1836 Emerson assisted (as referred to above) in bringing out an American edition of Carlyle's "*Sartor Resartus*"; and thereafter, for some years, he stood sponsor for Carlyle's books before the American people. Once, when Carlyle was in a very despondent mood at home, Emerson invited him to come to America to live, and even offered to share his house with him. And yet two men could scarcely be more unlike in almost the whole range of their being than these two were—Emerson, serene, placid, hopeful, and optimistic; Carlyle, moody, impetuous, despondent, and pessimistic; Emerson, courteous, and considerate of others; Carlyle, rough in speech and in manner, inconsiderate of others, and



EAST FRONT.



WEST FRONT.

EMERSON'S HOUSE, CONCORD, MASS.

*From photographs by A. W. Hosmer.*



splenetic; Emerson moving among his friends and neighbours as a pure and beneficent spirit from some higher sphere; Carlyle grumbling, discontented, and arousing resentment in many who found themselves the victims of his truculent criticism. But each did his own part of good in the world. Carlyle hated shams, and spent his life in condemning them and exposing them; Emerson spent his in arousing an enthusiasm for noble aims. Carlyle preached the gospel of work; Emerson the blessedness of high thinking. Carlyle glorified the achievements of personal force; Emerson the beneficence of pure and generous aspirations. To Carlyle the hero was the doer; to Emerson the great one was he who put a lofty ideal before the people. And, differ though they did, each retained a sincere admiration for the other as long as life endured. Almost the last words of Emerson were words of loving remembrance of Carlyle, "the good man—my friend," who had died but a short time before.

Emerson's principal work as a teacher of the people was done as a lecturer. In fact, nearly all his literary work, save his poems, was first produced with a view to use on the rostrum. As a man of letters Emerson's position in the world is unique. No other man of similar eminence, not a professional preacher, ever gave so much of his best thought to the people *viva voce*. Emerson, however, adopted lecturing as his profession, and he gave himself up to it wholly. Indeed, for many years it was his only means of making a living. As a lecturer he possessed in the fullest degree the characteristic of personal magnetism. His lectures were not attended merely by

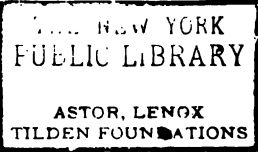
the learned or those who affected learning. He drew the crowd. He had an especial attraction for women and young people. But he captivated, equally well, hard-headed professional men and business men and hard-handed mechanics and tillers of the soil. The purity and richness of his voice, the benignity and expressiveness of his countenance, the grace and dignity of his personal bearing, the constant play of his delicate humour, and the constant shimmer of that poetic light "which never was on sea or land," were attractions that never failed to fascinate and satisfy. And yet often he must have talked over the heads of many of his auditors, and have suggested analogies and correspondences into which they could not possibly see. As Mr. Lowell once amusingly put it, in an address to farmers he would probably have said of Indian summer: "Now is the time to get in your early Vedas." But, nevertheless, Emerson always held his audience spellbound. His hearers felt themselves to be in the presence of a higher intelligence. They felt themselves to be under the influence of a superior power. They felt themselves also to be receiving the seed truths of a divine wisdom. These they garnered carefully in the hope of a speedy harvest in their own intelligences.

Emerson's poetry was merely the finer distillation of his prose. His whole intellectual outfit was that of a poet. His whole literary output was that of a poet also. He was not a scholar. He was not a logician. He was not a philosopher, as modern philosophers go. He cannot be measured by the gauges that apply to ordinary thinkers. As he himself once said: "I cannot



EMERSON'S GRAVE, CONCORD.

*From a photograph by A. W. Hooper.*



give an account of myself if challenged. I delight in telling what I think ; but if you ask me how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am the most helpless of men." He was a sage, a seer, a " holy man," not " of old," but of to-day. He wrote, speaking with reverence, " as the spirit gave him utterance." Of art, either in verse or prose, he was wholly unconscious. Every sentence seemed to be the immediate emanation of a fecundating intelligence. And that part of his work which was formally poetic showed, perhaps, the least art of all. He understood neither rhythm nor metre ; nor can he be said to have really understood rhyme. But poetic fire and force are always present ; and oftentimes a natural grace and felicity of expression, quite as effective as if it were the product of art the most consummate. Still, Emerson cannot be called a great poet, as we are accustomed to consider poets ; nor, indeed, a popular one. In a few pieces, like " The Humble Bee," " Each and All," " The Snow Storm," " Threnody " (a lament for his son), " The Concord Hymn," " The Boston Hymn," and " May Day," his direct and simple utterance is concerned with themes of popular significance, and they will live in the popular heart as long as any poetry lives. But for the most part Emerson's poetry is even more recondite than his most difficult prose, and is hardly ever read by other than Emersonian students. As poetry, apart from its ethical doctrine, it will scarcely be enduring.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston, May 25, 1803. The details of his biography are few and simple. His father, his grandfather, and numerous other of his

ancestors, were New England clergymen, every one in his day a man of consideration and distinction. His mother is described as a woman whose mind and character also were "of a superior order." He was the second of a family of five sons, two of whom, Edward and Charles, who both died in early manhood, also gave promise of great distinction. Emerson's youth was but an anticipation of his manhood. One classmate thus writes of him: "He was a spiritual-looking boy, whose image more than any other is still stamped upon my mind as I then saw him. I loved him, I knew not why, and thought him angelic and remarkable." Another writes: "His conduct was absolutely faultless. All that was wanted to render him an almost perfect character were a few harsher traits." "He was not talkative; he never spoke for effect; his utterances were well weighed and very deliberately made." He received the academic training usual at that time in his native State, and was graduated from Harvard at the age of eighteen. For a few years he taught school. At the age of twenty he began to prepare himself to enter the ministry. At the age of twenty-three, after three years of study, he was "approbated to preach." Precarious health led him to spend a winter in the South, but on his return home he found welcome engagements as a preacher in several New England towns. In 1829, at the age of twenty-six, he was ordained as an assistant minister to a congregation in Boston. In the same year he married; but his wife had delicate health, and in less than three years she was taken from him. In 1832 he resigned his pastorate, because of his want of sympathy with a doc-



trine which as a clergyman he would be expected to teach and preach. In 1833 he visited Europe and made the acquaintance of many European men of letters, especially in England and Scotland. In Scotland he preached. One of his Scottish hearers records of him that his voice "was the sweetest, the most winning, the most penetrating" that he had ever heard. Emerson's manner in the pulpit in those days of his gracious youth was most impressive. One of his American auditors records of him that he read and prayed "as an angel might have read and prayed." Even the singing of the choir "seemed coarse and discordant after his voice." After his return from Europe (1834) he settled in Concord, a town that for generations had been the home of his forefathers. His first residence was with a relative in the house that Hawthorne afterward made famous as "The Old Manse." Here he wrote his first important essay, "Nature." "Nature" is the obscurest, the most difficult of his works; but it contains the main burden of the Emersonian doctrine. It is a poem or rhapsody, rather than a treatise. Its relation to the rest of his work is aptly described by Carlyle, who in a letter to its author spoke of it as the "foundation" or "ground plan" "upon which you may build whatsoever of great and true is given to you to build."


When Emerson settled in Concord he gave up all thought of resuming his former profession of preaching, and decided to make his living by lecturing. He gave lectures to public audiences, singly and in courses, for many years, and ceased to do so only when in late life his failing health made such work impossible, and when, too,

the income he was obtaining as an author rendered it somewhat unnecessary. As has been said, nearly all of Emerson's prose writing was first given to the world as lectures; and even many of his poems first did duty as preludes or interludes to his spoken efforts. In 1835 he married his second wife, and immediately took up his residence in the house (in Concord) in which he passed the rest of his life, and in which, too, he died. In 1836 he read before his townspeople, at the unveiling of a monument to commemorate the "Fight on Concord Bridge," that "Concord Hymn" which first made him known to his fellow-countrymen as a poet. In 1837 he delivered, at Cambridge, before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard, that oration on "The American Scholar" which, as has been said, was accepted by the young scholarship of America as a declaration of American literary independence. In 1838 he delivered an address before the divinity school at Cambridge, which has been widely accepted as a like declaration of liberty for the individual conscience in all matters of creeds and religious discipline. From 1840 to 1847 he was connected, though very indirectly, with that "noble and generous experiment in better living" known as the "Brook Farm" movement, and for some time was editor of its organ, the *Dial*. In 1842 he lost his son, "a perfect little boy," the subject of that most beautiful of all his poems, "Threnody." In 1847 he visited Europe a second time, and delivered lectures afterward given to the world in a volume as "Representative Men." In 1855 he took a prominent part in the anti-slavery agitation. In 1856 he

published his "English Traits," the most interesting and one of the most suggestive and fecundating of all his books. In 1857 he was enrolled, with other distinguished literati, among the contributors to the newly established *Atlantic Monthly*; and of that famous club, the Saturday Club, that was made up principally of writers for that publication, he continued almost till his death one of the most regular attendants. In 1867 his principal volume of poetry was published, "May Day and Other Poems." In 1871 he made a visit to California, his only considerable travel in his own country. In 1872 his house was burned, the loss of which, at his age and in his circumstances, would have been exceedingly serious to him; but it was almost immediately restored by the voluntary kindness of friends, who, in little over three weeks, subscribed nearly \$12,000 for the purpose. In 1872-73, while his new house was building, he made his third trip to Europe. Not long after this trip, however, Emerson began to show signs of wearing out. Never physically strong or robust, his vigorous intellectual faculties lacked bodily and material support and sustenance; and the strain of incessant thought and introspection at last showed its sad effects. The memory was the first faculty to go. "He remembered the uses of things when he could not recall their names." Other faculties soon followed. His power of conversation grew weaker and weaker; even reading became difficult. But the sweetness of his disposition, the serenity of his temper, the winsomeness of his manner, remained to the end. When Longfellow died (1882), Emerson attended the funeral. It is related that, during

a pause that preceded the final ceremony, Emerson rose, looked at the old, familiar features, sat down again, and whispered to a friend near him: "That gentleman was a sweet, beautiful soul, but I have entirely forgotten his name." That was late in March. In April his own time came. He took a cold; then pneumonia set in; and death soon followed (April 27, 1882). Three days later, amid the sorrowful presence of many of the nation's wisest and best, with hymn and prayer and appropriate word, he was lowered to his last resting-place—at the top of Pine Tree Hill, in the cemetery of Sleepy Hollow. "Yet, though dead, he liveth." In the words of James Freeman Clarke in the "funeral address": "When we think of such an one as Emerson we can think only of life."

Emerson's place in English literature, in the literature of the world, is secure. He will always be read by the young, the aspiring, the noble-purposed; by every one whose heart has been touched by a coal from off the altar of purity and truth. But to his memory America owes a homage which should be paid with increasing honours year by year. Emerson made American thought cosmopolitan. He also gathered the thought of all ages and all peoples and brought it home and made it American. American literature, from his time forward, was no longer imitative or provincial. It became even more than the literature of a nation; it became a part of the literature of the world. But to Emerson is also due a greater praise. He not merely created thought; he created thinkers. His writing not merely instructs; it quickens. In the seed-time of intellectual youth the generous mind that comes



under Emerson's influence is as the plant of the field that comes under the influence of the heat-giving, life-arousing sun. In the heart a similar influence is felt. His teaching is always genetic of faith and hope and a desire for a nobler and higher life.

## *TEN-MINUTE TALK.*

BY MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN, LL.D.,

Professor of Literature, Catholic University of America.

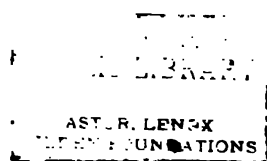
To appreciate the value of Emerson in our literature it must be remembered that he was a new voice speaking at a time when American men of letters were influenced by the traditions of the old English world. This world accepted conclusions ready-made and was conventional both in thought and expression. Shakespeare and Milton echoed the voices of the centuries that preceded them, and Tennyson and Newman were not new in the import of their messages, though they added new cadences to the English language. Carlyle strove hard to find a novel form for the spirit that was in him; but the past is always with him, in spite of his struggles to get rid of it; and the message of the oracle is often obscured by the efforts of the prophet to clothe it in a new garb.

With Emerson it is different; he has no conventional past; no past imposed upon him by hundreds of years of tradition. He teaches with serene unconsciousness of the prejudices of the older world. He does not feel bound to explain to a critical audience his processes of thought;



“MY GARDEN IS A FOREST LEDGE” (VIEW ON EMERSON’S PROPERTY AT CONCORD).

*From a photograph by A. W. Hoerner*



he gives their results. This accounts for the peculiar disjointedness of Emerson's style; you are aware that he has thought much, read much—but you must think much and go back many times in order to assimilate the meaning and flavour of his utterances. A page of Emerson's prose—at its best—is a theme for hours of meditation.

Bacon was influenced by Montaigne, Newman by Cicero, Emerson by Plato and Montaigne; but, while Bacon and Newman were moulded by the form of their authors, Emerson was not. He was the flint from which they struck fire, and then his thought, like the tinder in the old boxes, blazed. He has been to many minds as the steel which brought brilliant sparks from them; for Emerson's greatest worth to our American youth is his power of stimulating, of inspiring, of setting on fire.

A seer, a prophet, is seldom a philosopher; but he is always a poet. As an observer, as a man of feeling and imagination, clear and warm, but never passionate, posterity will judge the first American to break from English literary traditions.

Born at Boston, Massachusetts, in 1803, and prepared for college in the intellectual atmosphere of his home, he showed his promise at the age of seventeen, when he wrote, at Bowdoin College, his essay on "The Character of Socrates." He gained a prize for this, but not the first prize. In 1821 he offered "The Present State of Ethical Philosophy," which did not win James Bowdoin's fifty dollars, but attained the second prize of thirty dollars. These papers are evidence that the boy Emerson was father to the man. They have none of the rhetorical

characteristics of the prize essay or graduating oration of the modern collegian; they are, above all, simple and direct. It is plain that the writer had not only carefully studied his subjects, within the limitations of his age and opportunities, but had so studied them that the result was part of himself. Edward Everett Hale recommends the comparison of "The Character of Socrates" (1820) with "Plato" (1876) in "Representative Men." The growth, the essential unity, and the change of style, in Emerson can easily be gauged by such a comparison.

In "The Present State of Ethical Philosophy" (1821) the boy says: "We are justified in preferring morals to every other science; for that science has more permanent interest than any other which, outliving the substance on which other knowledge is founded, is to retain its relations to us when man is resolved into spirit. That which constitutes the healthy integrity of the universe should be known as far as that universe extends to the intelligences which will imbibe and enjoy the benevolence of its Author."

Through all the essays runs the love of natural morality, and the sternness of Calvinism is tempered by an optimism which ought to be cultivated by the young and the old in our rich and hopeful community. Grown older, he says, in "The Conservative": "It is frivolous to say you have no acre because you have not a mathematically measured piece of land. Providence takes care that you shall have a place, that you are waited for and come accredited; and as soon as you put your gift to use you shall have an acre or an acre's worth, according to

your exhibition of desert—acre if you need it; acre's worth if you prefer to draw or carve or make shoes or wheels to the tilling of the soil."

Emerson preaches the highest contentment from his serene height. He is narrow but keen. He has the boldness of the natural man discovering a civilised spot and calling it his, and of the self-made man who does not fear the minor things of artificial life which are restraints to the artificial man. For him the Parthenon is no longer in Greece, but in America; the ages do not separate him from it; time makes no mists for him; his air, new and fresh, is without clouding atoms. He presents the results of Christian morality without being dogmatically a Christian. Perhaps if he had suffered or struggled the Crucified might have drawn him to the supernatural for consolation, but none of his words bear the traces of sorrow that sears and scars. His revolt from puritanism had left him without belief in anything that seemed formal, and his Christ is only an abstraction, or, rather, a shadow of his own heart. His famous "Nature" expresses him most sincerely and poetically; his address at Cambridge (1838) shows his attitude toward dogmatic Christianity. Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, said many things which he says in his personal way; but he appeals to his time and to the good in his time. You cannot read a page in Emerson without, if you are of good will, being mentally richer or better. He is American and hopeful. He hates mere materialism; he shows us the genius of the ancients without being overweighted by it. When he died, in 1882, he had accomplished his

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mission and left a message which will gain volume as his country grows older.

Emerson was an observer, as a poet must be, and as a poet he will be regarded, though his claims to a broad philosophy may cease to be urged. He had the power of congealing a world of observation into a single line. "Every man's nature," he says in "Politics," "is a sufficient advertisement of the character of his fellows." A thousand quotations might be added, showing this faculty of condensation. "The Conduct of Life," "Letters and Social Aims," and "Society and Solitude" will always be popular. Of his poems in verse, "The Sphinx," "The Rhodora," and "Brahma," are best known. His others deserve to be placed in the highest niche reserved for American poets. As he sings, in "The Problem" :

"Himself from God he could not free;  
He builded better than he knew."

*REMINISCENCES AND CRITICAL STUDIES*  
*SELECTED.*

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CONCORD: EMERSON'S HOME.

THE place in which Emerson passed the greater part of his life well deserves a special notice. Concord might sit for its portrait as an ideal New England town. If wanting in the variety of surface which many other towns can boast of, it has at least a vision of the distant summits of Monadnock and Wachusett. It has fine old woods, and noble elms to give dignity to its open spaces. Beautiful ponds, as they modestly call themselves—one of which, Walden, is as well known in our literature as Windermere in that of Old England,—lie quietly in their clear basins. And through the green meadows runs, or rather lounges, a gentle, unsalted stream, like an English river licking its grassy margin with a sort of bovine placidity and contentment. This is the Musketaquid, or Meadow River, which, after being joined by the more restless Assabet, still keeps its temper and flows peacefully along by and through other towns, to lose itself in the broad Merrimac.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, *in*

"Ralph Waldo Emerson," in "*American Men of Letters*" series (Hos.).

EMERSON AT COLLEGE—HIS EARLY TASTES IN  
READING AND STUDY.

Young Emerson entered Harvard University in his fourteenth year; viz., in 1817. Edward Everett was then Professor of Greek Literature. His lecturing and Sunday preaching had a powerful influence upon the boy student. Ticknor was also a professor at that time, and was an inspiring influence to the students. In the class before Emerson was Furness. Every graduating class in the university elects a poet and an orator for its celebration, which is called "class-day," and Emerson was chosen as the poet of his class. In his junior year he received a Bowdoin prize for an essay on "The Character of Socrates," and in his senior year he again gained a prize, his subject being "The Present State of Ethical Philosophy." Among his companions he was already distinguished for literary attainments, and more especially for a certain charm in the delivery of his addresses. He was then described as "a slender, delicate youth, younger than most of his classmates, and of a sensitive, retiring nature." According to his own account he received but little instruction from his professors that was of value to him. His favourite study was Greek, and his translations of the classical authors were neat and happy. In mathematics he could make no headway, and in philosophy he did not get on very well. He was a great

reader, and studied much outside of the prescribed course. Even before entering college he was well read. His favourite books were the old English poets and dramatists—Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Shakespeare<sup>1</sup> he knew almost by heart. Montaigne<sup>1</sup> had special attraction for him. When a boy, he found a volume of his "Essays" among his father's books; after leaving college it again came to his notice, and he procured the remaining volumes. "I remember the delight and wonder in which I lived with him. It seemed to me as if I had myself written the book in some former life, so sincerely did he speak to my thought and experience." Tillotson, St. Augustine, and Jeremy Taylor were also among his favourite authors.—ALEXANDER IRELAND, in "*Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life, Genius, and Writings: A Biographical Sketch*" (Simp.).

#### EMERSON'S SEPARATION FROM THE CHURCH.

In June of 1832 Emerson proposed to his church that they should dispense with the use of the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and not insist upon the authority for its observance. It seems as if he had had little doubt that his people would be willing to give up the form and keep the spirit, and I have been told by one of his flock that many of the younger members of his church were ready to go with him in his views and practice, though one lady came to him after the meeting and said: "You

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, so Dr. Holmes says, is quoted by Emerson in his works 112 times; Montaigne, 30 times.

have taken my Lord away and I know not where you have laid Him," and I have read the sorrowful entries at this time in the diary of one of the most earnest of the younger worshippers. The church refused to allow him to make the changes he proposed or to discontinue his part of the rite.

During the time while the question of his relations with the church was under the consideration of the committee, he went alone to the mountains to consider his duty. He very fairly stated to himself the other side of the question, how for his aversion to a form in which he had been brought up, and which usage and association had endeared to many of the best of his flock, he was about to break the strong tie that bound him to his people and enabled him, after painful years of preparation, to be a light and help and comfort to them. But to preserve this bond, he must at the very altar, where all thought should be highest and all action truest, do violence to his spiritual instincts and smother his convictions and admit that form could outweigh spirit. Whether or not the lower considerations of a pleasant and settled sphere of usefulness presented themselves, this was enough, and he came down from the mountain having said: "Get thee behind me, Satan," to meet his people, explained very simply to them his belief that the Scriptural observance had not the claims of authority, for their satisfaction, but frankly stating that his own objection was not of texts, but the witness against the rite in his own breast, and he resigned his charge. He and his people parted in all kindness.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON, in "*Emerson*

*in Concord."* (A "Memoir" written for the "Social Circle," Concord, Massachusetts) (Hou.).

#### EMERSON'S BELIEF IN THE STILL, SMALL VOICE.

Spirit and not form was what Emerson had been striving for in public worship, and the simple worship of the more liberal Quakers pleased him much. Not long after this,<sup>1</sup> his cousin, the Rev. David Green Haskins, tells that when asked by him about his sympathy with Swedenborgian ideas, and to define his religious position, Mr. Emerson said very slowly: "I believe I am more of a Quaker than anything else. I believe in the 'still, small voice,' and that voice is Christ within us."—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (Cf. above.)

#### EMERSON'S CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE AS A CLERGYMAN.

Emerson was born in a family where the fear of God was absorbed in the love of God. His soul was infused with cheer from his infancy. He entered and passed through college without a blemish on his name. He became by "natural selection" a Unitarian minister, and did his appointed work to the entire satisfaction of his parish. No clergyman was ever more heartily loved than he by those who listened to his discourses and were favoured with his Christian companionship. He brought cheer and hope into every household where he appeared.

<sup>1</sup> The time referred to is 1834.

There are many unpublished memorials celebrating the effect which the sweet and unaffected sanctity of his character produced in towns remote from Boston, when he "exchanged" services with his brother clergymen. One letter, written by the most cultivated and self-sacrificing woman then living in Massachusetts, testified that the Unitarian Association had sent, for one Sunday, to the Northampton Unitarians an angel when the latter only asked for a preacher.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE, in "*Emerson and Carlyle*," in "*American Literature and Other Papers*" (Hou.).

#### EMERSON'S FIRST VISIT TO CARLYLE.

In August of the same year (1833) Emerson made a pilgrimage to Scotland. He remained some days in Edinburgh and delivered a discourse in the Unitarian Chapel there, recollections of which happily survive. Desirous of personally acknowledging to Carlyle his indebtedness for the spiritual benefit he had derived from certain of his writings—notably the concluding passage in the article on "German Literature," and the paper entitled "Characteristics"—he found his way, after many hindrances, to Craigenputtoch, among the desolate hills of the parish of Dunscore, in Dumfriesshire, where Carlyle was then living with his bright and accomplished wife in perfect solitude, without a person to speak to, or a post-office within seven miles. There he spent twenty-four hours and became acquainted with him at once. They walked over miles of barren hills, and talked upon

all the great questions which interested them most. The meeting is described in Emerson's "English Traits," published twenty-three years afterwards, and the account of it there given is reprinted by Mr. Froude in his "Life of Carlyle," etc., lately issued. Carlyle and his wife often afterward spoke of that visit, "when that supernal vision, Waldo Emerson, dawned upon us," as if it had been the coming of an angel. They regarded Emerson as a "beautiful apparition" in their solitude.—ALEXANDER IRELAND. (*Cf.* above.)

#### THE FRIENDSHIP OF EMERSON AND CARLYLE.

The fact itself of a young American having been so affected by his writings as to have sought him out on the Dunscore moors, was a homage of the kind which he (Carlyle) could especially value and appreciate. The acquaintance then begun to their mutual pleasure ripened into a deep friendship, which has remained unclouded in spite of wide divergencies of opinion throughout their working lives, and continues warm as ever at the moment when I am writing these words (June 27, 1880), when the labours of both of them are over, and they wait in age and infirmity to be called away from a world to which they have given freely all that they had to give."—JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE. *Quoted by Mr. Ireland.*

#### EMERSON AND "SARTOR RESARTUS."

Emerson has the distinction of having been the first eminent literary man of either continent to appreciate and

welcome "Sartor Resartus." The book was written in 1831 at Craigenputtoch, but could find no publisher for two years. At last it appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in successive chapters, in 1833-34 (Carlyle having to accept reduced remuneration); and it was not till 1838 that it appeared as a volume in England. While subscribers were complaining of the "intolerable balderdash" appearing from month to month in the magazine, under the title of "Sartor Resartus"—"sentences which might be read backward or forward, for they are equally intelligible either way"—and threatening to withdraw their subscriptions if "that clotted nonsense" did not speedily cease, Emerson was quietly collecting the successive numbers with a view to its publication on completion. In 1836 the American edition of the work appeared in Boston, and was sufficiently successful to yield a profit of £150, which Emerson sent to Carlyle—the most important sum which he had, up to that time, received for any of his works.—ALEXANDER IRELAND. (Cf. above.)

#### EMERSON AND MARGARET FULLER.

Emerson had returned from Europe, had recovered his health, had married a second time, had settled at Concord, and he and I had gotten over being shy with each other; but he had not gotten on as well with Margaret Fuller. Margaret wrote poetry, and people laughed about it, and said she wrote it in fits of exaltation, which she called "intense times." This gave Mr. Emerson, who was very simple and natural, a prejudice against her.

One day, when visiting at his house, I expressed the wish that he could know Margaret better. Mrs. Emerson, who is the soul of disinterested kindness, proposed at once that Margaret be invited to come to their house. "Oh, no," cried Mr. Emerson, "I don't want to know a lady who has 'intense times,' and writes poetry in them." Then I went on and told how I had had the same prejudice; how it all melted away when I conversed with her, and how, in talking with me, she had made the whole universe look larger. At this assurance Mr. Emerson's face suddenly lighted, and, turning to his wife, he exclaimed: "Yes, Queenie, you are right. Invite her, by all means. Let us welcome any young woman whose converse can make the whole universe look larger to us."<sup>1</sup>—ELIZABETH PALMER PEABODY (*Hawthorne's sister-in-law*). *Quoted by Mr. Ireland.*

<sup>1</sup> Emerson (with James Freeman Clarke and W. H. Channing) afterwards wrote the "Memoirs" of Margaret Fuller. Among many other tributes, Emerson said of her: "She became an established friend and frequent inmate of our house, and continued thenceforward for years to come, once in three or four months, to spend a week or a fortnight with us. . . . Her ready sympathies endeared her to my wife and my mother, each of whom highly esteemed her good sense and sincerity. . . . She was an active, inspiring companion and correspondent; and all the art, the thought, and the nobleness of New England seemed related to her, and she to it. . . . The day was never long enough to exhaust her opulent memory; and I, who knew her intimately for ten years, never saw her without surprise at her new powers. . . . Her talents were so various, and her conversation so rich and entertaining, that one might talk with her many times, by the parlour fire, before he discovered the strength which served as foundation to so much accomplishment and eloquence."

## EMERSON'S USE OF HIS JOURNAL.

All through his life Emerson kept a journal. On the first leaf of that for 1837 he wrote:

"This book is my savings' bank. I grow richer because I have somewhere to deposit my earnings, and fractions are worth more to me because corresponding fractions are waiting here that shall become integers by their addition."

The thoughts thus received and garnered in his journals were later indexed, and a great part of them reappeared in his published works. They were religiously set down just as they came, in no order except chronological, but later they were grouped, enlarged or pruned, illustrated, worked into a lecture or discourse, and after having in this capacity undergone repeated testing and rearranging, were finally carefully sifted and more rigidly pruned and were printed as essays. Some one said to him: "You take out all the most interesting parts" (anecdotes and illustrations used in the lecture room), "and call it putting on their Greek jackets."—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf.* above.)

"THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR."<sup>1</sup>

This grand oration was our intellectual Declaration of Independence. Nothing like it had been heard in the halls of Harvard since Samuel Adams supported the

<sup>1</sup> "An Oration delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, August 31, 1837."

affirmative of the question, "Whether it be lawful to resist the chief magistrate, if the commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved." It was easy to find fault with an expression here and there. The dignity, not to say the formality, of an academic assembly was startled by the realism that looked for the infinite in "the meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan." They could understand the deep thoughts suggested by "the meanest flower that blows," but these domestic illustrations had a kind of nursery homeliness which the grave professors and the sedate clergymen were unused to expect on so stately an occasion. But the young men went out from it as if a prophet had been proclaiming to them "Thus saith the Lord." No listener ever forgot that address, and among all the noble utterances of the speaker it may be questioned if one ever contained more truth in language more like that of immediate inspiration.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S GREAT SORROW.

A great sorrow visited Emerson and his household at this period of his life [his early married life]. On the 30th of October, 1841, he wrote to Carlyle:

"My little boy is five years old to-day, and almost old enough to send you his love."

Three months later, on the 28th of February, 1842, he writes once more:

"My dear friend, you should have had this letter and these messages by the last steamer; but when it sailed, my son, a perfect little boy of five years and three months, had ended his earthly life. You can never sympathise with me; you can never know how much of me such a young child can take away. A few weeks ago I counted myself a very rich man; and now the poorest of all. What would it avail to tell you anecdotes of a sweet and wonderful boy, such as we solace and sadden ourselves with at home every morning and evening? From a perfect health and as happy a life and as happy influences as ever child enjoyed, he was hurried out of my arms in three short days by scarlatina. We have two babes yet—one girl of three years and one girl of three months and a week—but a promise like that Boy's I shall never see. How often I have pleased myself that one day I should send to you this Morning Star of mine, and stay at home so gladly behind such a representative! I dare not fathom the Invisible and Untold to enquire what relations to my Departed ones I yet sustain."

This was the boy whose memory lives in the tenderest and most pathetic of Emerson's poems, "The Threnody"—a lament not unworthy of comparison with "Lycidas" for dignity, but full of the simple pathos of Cowper's well-remembered lines on the receipt of his mother's picture, in the place of Milton's sonorous academic phrases.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON AND THE BROOK FARM EXPERIMENT.

About this time (1841) originated the notable experiment of the Brook Farm Community, with which Emerson sympathised, but which he never joined, although he frequently visited the Farm. It was one of the many

movements of the day, pointing to a new order of things. To all these movements Emerson gave his sympathy, "in so far as they expressed a genuine purpose, and showed a candid desire to make life richer with truth." The social and educational reformation of mankind by means of temperance, the common and normal school, associated living, and other agencies, was advocated at conventions of all kinds and in the press. A society called "The Friends of Universal Progress" held conventions in Boston to revitalise the old church forms and doctrines, and to discuss the institutions of the Sabbath, the church, and the ministry. Almost all of Emerson's friends were connected with these various movements. The Brook Farm men and women he loved, "and thoroughly sympathised with their anxious desire to make life better; but he saw the folly of their experiment and its weaknesses, and he quickly discovered the evils which it fostered in place of those it attempted to escape. His sense of humour was always a restraining and sanitary influence in his character. He saw the ridiculous, the incongruous side of Brook Farm; and his humour, his rare perception of the fitness of things, led him to see that finely conceived reform in its real light."—ALEXANDER IRELAND. (*Cf.* above.)

THE BROOK FARM COMMUNITY.—AN ACCOUNT OF IT.

Provisions were either raised on the farm or purchased at wholesale. Meals were eaten in "commons." It was the rule that all should labour—choosing their occupa-

tions, and the number of hours, and receiving wages according to the hours. No labour was hired that could be supplied within the community; and all labour was rewarded alike, on the principle that physical labour was more irksome than mental, more absorbing and exacting, less improving and delightful. Moreover, to recognise practically the nobility of labour, in and of itself, none were appointed to special kinds of work. All took their turn at the several branches of employment. None were drudges or menials. The intellectual gave a portion of their time to tasks such as servants and hand-maidens usually discharge. The unintellectual were allowed a portion of their time for mental cultivation. The benefits of social intercourse were thrown open to all. The aim was to secure as many hours as practicable from the necessary toil of providing for the wants of the body, that there might be more leisure to provide for the deeper wants of the soul. The acquisition of wealth was no object. No more thought was given to this than the exigencies of existence demanded. To live, expand, enjoy as rational beings, was the never-forgotten aim.

The community trafficked, by way of exchange and barter, with the outside world; sold its surplus produce; sold its culture to as many as came or sent children to be taught. It was hoped that from the accumulated results of all this labour the appliances for intellectual and spiritual health might be obtained; that books might be bought, works of art, scientific collections and apparatus, and means of decoration and refinement, all of which should be open on the same terms to every member of the

association. The principle of coöperation was substituted for the principle of competition; self-development for selfishness. The faith was avowed in every arrangement that the soul of humanity was in each man and woman.

The reputation for genius, accomplishment, and wit which the founders of the Brook Farm enterprise enjoyed in society attracted toward it the attention of the public, and awakened expectation of something much more than ordinary in the way of literary advantages. The settlement became a resort for cultivated men and women who had experience as teachers and wished to employ their talent to the best effect; and for others who were tired of the conventionalities, and sighed for honest relations with their fellow-beings. Some took advantage of the easy hospitality of the association, and came there to live mainly at its expense—their unskilled and incidental labour being no compensation for their entertainment. The most successful department was the school. Pupils came thither in considerable numbers and from considerable distances. Distinguished visitors gave charm and reputation to the place.

The members were never numerous; the number varied considerably from year to year. Seventy was a fair average; of these fewer than half were young people sent thither to be educated. Several adults came for intellectual assistance. Of married people there were, in 1844, but four pairs. A great deal was taught and learned at Brook Farm. Classics, mathematics, general literature, æsthetics, occupied the busy hours. The most productive

work was done in these ideal fields, and the best result of it was a harvest in the ideal world, a new sense of life's elasticity and joy, the delight of freedom, the innocent satisfaction of spontaneous relations.—OCTAVIUS BROOKE FROTHINGHAM, in "*Transcendentalism in New England*" (Put.).

#### THE SOCIETY AT BROOK FARM.

The society at Brook Farm was composed of every kind of person. There were the ripest scholars, men and women of the most æsthetic culture and accomplishment, young farmers, seamstresses, mechanics, preachers—the industrious, the lazy, the conceited, the sentimental. But they were associated in such a spirit and under such conditions that, with some extravagance, the best of everybody appeared, and there was a kind of *esprit de corps*, at least in the earlier or golden age of the colony. There was plenty of steady, essential hard work; for the founding of an earthly Paradise upon a rough New England farm is no pastime. But with the best intention and much practical knowledge and industry and devotion, there was in the nature of the case an inevitable lack of method, and the economical failure was almost a foregone conclusion. But there were never such witty potato patches and such sparkling corn-fields before or since. The weeds were scratched out of the ground to the music of Tennyson or Browning, and the nooning was an hour as gay and bright as any brilliant midnight at Ambrose's. But in the midst of all was one figure, the

practical farmer, an honest neighbour who was not drawn to the enterprise by any spiritual attraction, but was hired at good wages to superintend the work, and who always seemed to be regarding the whole affair with the most good-natured wonder as a prodigious masquerade. Indeed, the description which Hawthorne gives of him at a real masquerade of the farmers in the woods depicts his attitude toward Brook Farm itself: "And apart, with a shrewd Yankee observation of the scene, stands our friend Orange, a thick-set, sturdy figure, enjoying the fun well enough, yet rather laughing with a perception of its nonsensicalness than at all entering into the spirit of the thing." That, indeed, was very much the attitude of Hawthorne himself toward Brook Farm. . . .

The spirit that was concentrated at Brook Farm is diffused, but it is not lost. As an organised effort, after many downward changes, it failed; but those who remember the Hive, the Eyrie, the Cottage—when Margaret Fuller came and talked, radiant with bright humour; when Emerson and Parker and Hedge joined the circle for a night or a day; when those who may not be publicly named brought beauty and wit and social sympathy to the feast; when the practical possibilities of life seemed fairer, and life and character were touched ineffaceably with good influence—cherish a pleasant vision which no fate can harm, and remember with ceaseless gratitude the blithe days at Brook Farm.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

## EMERSON'S LIBRARY.

Mr. Emerson's library is the room at the right of the door upon entering the house. It is a simple, square room, not walled with books like the den of a literary grub, nor merely elegant like the ornamental retreat of a dilettante. The books are arranged upon plain shelves, not in architectural bookcases, and the room is hung with a few choice engravings of the greatest men. It is the study of a scholar. All our author's published writings, the essays, orations, and poems, date from this room, as much as they date from any place or moment. The villagers, indeed, fancy their philosophical contemporary affected by the novelist James' <sup>1</sup> constancy of composition. They relate, with wide eyes, that he has a huge manuscript book, in which he incessantly records the ends of thoughts, bits of observation and experience, and facts of all kinds—a kind of intellectual and scientific rag-bag, into which all shreds and remnants of conversations and reminiscences of wayside reveries are incontinently thrust. This work goes on, they aver, day and night, and when he travels the rag-bag travels too, and grows more plethoric with each mile of the journey. And a story, which will one day be a tradition, is perpetuated in the village, that one night, before his wife had become completely accustomed to his habits, she awoke suddenly, and hearing him groping about the room, inquired anxiously:

"My dear, are you unwell?"

<sup>1</sup> G. P. R. James, the historical novelist. "The number of James' works is immense,"—SHAW'S "*History of Literature*."

"No, my love, only an idea."

The library is not only the study of a scholar, it is the bower of a poet. The pines lean against the windows, and to the student deeply sunk in learned lore or soaring upon the daring speculations of an intrepid philosophy, they whisper a secret beyond that of the philosopher's stone, and sing of the springs of poetry.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, in "*Emerson*," in "*Homes of American Authors*." First printed in 1854, now reprinted in "*Literary and Social Essays*" (Har.).

#### EMERSON'S LIBRARY—A SECOND ACCOUNT.

My note of introduction was presented, and my welcome was cordial. Emerson was, apparently, yet young; he was tall, slender, of light complexion; his step was elastic, his manner easy and simple; and his voice at once relieved me of the trembling with which I stood before him—the first great man I had ever seen. He proposed to take me on a walk; and whilst he was preparing, I had the opportunity of looking about the library. Over the mantel hung an excellent copy of Michael Angelo's *Parcæ*<sup>1</sup>; on it there were two statuettes of Goethe, of whom also there were engraved copies on the walls. Afterwards Emerson showed me eight or ten portraits of Goethe which he had collected. The next in favour was Dante, of whom he had all the known likenesses, including various photographs of the mask of Dante, made at Ravenna. Besides portraits of Shakespeare, Montaigne, and

<sup>1</sup> "The Fates."

Swedenborg, I remember nothing else on the walls of the library. The book-shelves were well filled with select works; amongst which I was only struck with the many curious Oriental productions, some in Sanscrit. He had, too, many editions, in Greek and English, of Plato, which had been carefully read and marked. The furniture of the room was antique and simple. There were on one side of the room four considerable shelves, completely occupied by his MSS., of which there were enough, one might suppose, to have furnished a hundred volumes instead of the seven which he has given to the world, though under perpetual pressure for more from the publishers and the public.—MONCURE D. CONWAY, in "*Emerson at Home and Abroad*" (Hou.).

#### EMERSON'S "STUDY."

Strangers wish to see his study; the woods were his best study during the years of his greatest spiritual activity, and the study, so-called, at home, rather his library and writing-room. In months when the weather allowed he went often to the oracle in the pine wood and waited with joyful trust for the thought.

"In dreamy woods what forms abound  
That elsewhere never poet found:  
Here voices ring, and pictures burn,  
And grace on grace where'er I turn."

There he felt that he saw things healthily, largely, in their just order and perspective.

He sometimes took his notebook with him, but more often recorded the thought on his return, striving to give it exactly as it came to him, for he felt that men were

“Pipes though which the breath of God doth blow  
A momentary music.”

Even in the winter storms he was no stranger to the woods, and the early journals show that he liked to walk alone at night for the inspiration he ever found in the stars.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf. above.*)

#### THE SPIRIT IN WHICH EMERSON WENT TO NATURE.

Emerson did not go to Nature as the Man of Science does, nor as the Artist often does, to note mere physical facts and laws, or surface beauty. He saw in visible nature only a garment giving to wise eyes the hint of what lay underneath:


“Ever the words of the gods resound;  
But the porches of man's ear  
Seldom in this low life's round  
Are unsealed, that they may hear.  
Wandering voices in the air  
And murmurs in the wold  
Speak what I cannot declare,  
Yet cannot all withhold.”

When he returned to his room and took up the books of the authors, there was sometimes a shock felt. He tried them by Nature's great standards, and they perhaps were

found wanting, but in the cases of the greatest masters, Nature but illustrated their idealism and stamped it as true. Not only among the poets and prophets, but (perhaps with Goethe as a bridge) in the works of the advancing men of science—John Hunter, Lamarck, Lyell, Owen, Darwin—he was quick to recognise a great thought, and his own spiritual studies in Concord woods made him meet almost more than half way the new discoveries of progressive improvement with unbounded possibilities in the living creature.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.

#### EMERSON'S COÖPERATION WITH HIS NEIGHBOURS.

In 1842 I find that Mr. Emerson was associated with [two other Concord citizens] as a director of the Concord Athenæum, a sort of Reading-Room, where, for a small fee, citizens could have access to a number of newspapers and magazines, which, but for such an institution, would never have come within the reach of most of them. He joined the Fire Association, and the leathern buckets and baize bag always hung over the stairs in the side entry, but the introduction of the hand-engines and organisation of the Fire Department rendered them obsolete, and within my recollection they were hardly taken down. He went in the neighbourly fashion of those days to fires in the woods, and fought fire with his pine bough (appropriate weapon for this lover of the pine) side by side with his neighbours.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.



## EMERSON AND SUNDAY OBSERVANCE.

Emerson always expected that Sunday should be observed in the household, not with the old severity, but with due regard for a custom which he valued for itself as well as for association, and also for the feelings of others. We could read and walk, but were not expected to have toys or to play games or romp or to go to drive or row. He was glad to have us go to church. His own attitude in the matter was, that it was only a question for each person where the best church was—in the solitary wood, the chamber, the talk with the serious friend, or in hearing the preacher. This was shown when a young woman working in his household, in answer to his inquiry whether she had been to the church, said brusquely: "No, she didn't trouble the church much." He said quietly: "Then you have somewhere a little chapel of your own," a courteous assumption which perhaps set her thinking. He never liked to attack the beliefs of others, but always held that lower beliefs needed no attacks, but were sure to give way by displacement when higher ones were given.

—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.

## EMERSON'S GARDENING.

The gradual increase of the two-acre lot to a little farm of about nine acres, by the purchase of the neighbouring lots for vegetable garden, orchard, and pasture, gave Mr. Emerson pleasant grounds, protected his study from interruptions incident to too near neighbours, and gave him

usually an hour's exercise a day in the care of his growing trees, and incidentally pleasure and health, though he grudged the time from his indoor tasks. The record of these purchases, by the way, and the terms which I find scattered through the account-books are an amusing commentary upon his alleged shrewdness. Work with hoe and spade for an hour or two of the day was part of his plan of country life, and he did it at first, but soon found that the garden, with all its little beckoning and commanding arms of purslain and smart-weed and Roman wormwood stretched out, was all too strong and cunning in detaining him from his proper task.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S PRACTICAL FRIENDS.

His friends, Mr. George Bradford and Henry Thoreau, at different times and during their stay at his house, took the care of the garden into their skilful hands, greatly to his relief, though he came out when he could and worked with them, before the addition of new fields, the lots whence the thirty cords of wood for the fire must be cut and hauled home, and the purchase of a horse and one or two cows, required that a man should be hired to give his whole time and attention to the farm. This was a relief to my father, but there had been in the earlier irregular husbandry much to gild the drudgery when his good and manly friends, whose greater skill and practical knowledge of the garden he admired, worked near him. His friend Channing, the poet, once cut his wood for him, and

Thoreau planted his barren pasture, close by the Walden hermitage,<sup>1</sup> which was on his friend's land, with pines and larches.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.

THE SUMMER-HOUSE MR. ALCOTT BUILT FOR  
EMERSON.

Mr. Alcott, in 1847, fashioned from gnarled limbs of pine, oak with knotty excrescences, and straight trunks of cedar, a fantastic but pleasing structure, some hundred steps from the house, for a retired study for his friend [Emerson]. In this work he was helped by Mr. Thoreau, whose practical mind was chafed at seeing a building, with no plan, feeling its way up, as it were, dictated at each step by the suggestion of the crooked bough that was used, and necessarily often altered. He said: "I feel as if I were nowhere doing nothing." When it was nearly done some one said: "It looks like a church." The idea was not to be tolerated by the transcendental architect, so the porch had to come down for its look of untimely sanctimony. Thoreau drove the nails, and drove them well, but as Mr. Alcott made the eaves curve upward for beauty, and lined the roof with velvet moss and *sphagnum*, Nature soon reclaimed it. Indeed, Madam Emerson *naïvely* called it "The Ruin" when it was fresh from the hand of the builder. In spite of its real beauty, which drew many people to see it, the draughts (for it was full of apertures for doors and windows) and the mosquitoes from the meadow close by made it untenable, and my father never used it as a study.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.

<sup>1</sup> Where Thoreau lived.

EMERSON AND THE CONCORD "SOCIAL CIRCLE."<sup>1</sup>

In 1839 Emerson was elected a member of the Social Circle. This gave him opportunity to meet socially, and in his turn to entertain, many of his townsmen, with whom otherwise, from his secluded habits and scholarly pursuits, he would hardly have formed acquaintance.

In 1844 (December 17th) he writes to a friend in Boston:

"Much the best society I have ever known is a club in Concord called the Social Circle, consisting always of twenty-five of our citizens—doctor, lawyer, farmer, trader, miller, mechanic, etc., solidest of men, who yield the solidest of gossip. Harvard University is a wafer compared to the solid land which my friends represent. I do not like to be absent from home on Tuesday evenings in winter."

His long lecturing trips in the West prevented his attending meetings so much as he would have liked. He was for forty-three years a member; the last meeting he attended being the celebration of the hundredth year of the existence of the club, which occurred only a month before his death. He was then the senior member.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf.* above.)

## EMERSON'S "ENGLISH TRAITS."

Emerson's "English Traits," forming one volume of his works, was published in 1856. It is a thoroughly

<sup>1</sup> It was for "The Book" of the Concord Social Circle that the "Memoir" of his father was written by Dr. Emerson.

fresh and original book. It is not a tourist's guide, not a detailed description of sights which tired the traveller in staring at them, and tire the reader who attacks the wearying pages in which they are recorded. Shrewd observation there is indeed, but its strength is in broad generalisation and epigrammatic characterisations.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

#### EMERSON'S MODE OF LIVING.


Emerson's mode of living was very simple: coffee in the morning, tea in the evening, animal food by choice only once a day, wine only when with others using it, but always *pie* at breakfast. "It stood before him, and was the first thing eaten." Ten o'clock was his bed-time, six his hour of rising until the last ten years of his life, when he rose at seven. Work or company sometimes led him to sit up late, and this he could do night after night. He never was hungry—could go any time from breakfast to tea without food and not know it, but was always ready for food when it was set before him.

He always walked from about four in the afternoon till tea-time, and often longer when the day was fine, or he felt that he should work the better.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

#### TEMPERANCE, NOT ABSTINENCE, EMERSON'S CUSTOM.

Mr. Emerson's instinct in matters of eating and drinking was Spartan. His tastes were simple, and he took

whatever was set before him with healthy appetite, but hardly knowing or asking what it might be. Rarely he noticed and praised some dish in an amusing manner, but, should any mention of ingredients arise, he always interrupted with "No, no! It is made of violets; it has no common history," or other expressions to that purpose. At the height of the epoch when philosophers and reformers sought him constantly and sat as guests at his table, shuddering at flesh or stimulants, or products of slave-labour, or foreign luxuries, or even at roots because they grew downwards, he was so hospitable to every new thought or project that aimed to make life more spiritual, that he was willing to try what might lie in it; and when his guests were gone, he on one or two occasions tried their experiment, even went to his study direct from his bedroom in the morning for several days, and there had bread and water brought to him, instead of the comfortable family meal and the two cups of coffee to which he was accustomed; but his strong sense showed him at once that those very means undid what they aimed at, by making questions of eating and drinking of altogether too much importance, and also unfitting the body and mind for their best work—and temperance, not abstinence, became, as before, his custom without effort or further thought about so slight a matter which filled smaller men's horizons. It did not escape his notice that "A. bears wine better than B. bears water."—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf.* above.)



## EMERSON'S APPRECIATION OF TIME.

On indoor games Emerson looked with a more jealous eye,<sup>1</sup> remembering how he and his friends had amused themselves with good reading; only tolerated his children's acting in juvenile plays, and always disliked card-playing. On one occasion two of us had just learned some childish game of cards, and being dressed some time before breakfast, sat down to play. When he entered he exclaimed: "No, no, no! Put them away. Never affront the sacred morning with the sight of cards. When the day's work is done, or you are sick, then perhaps they will do, but never in the daylight! No!" Probably the traditions of his youth and his family's calling had something to do with the aversion always felt for cards, but his value of Nature and books as teachers made him grudge valuable time so spent.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.

EMERSON'S PERSONAL APPEARANCE AND HEIGHT  
AND SIZE.


Emerson's personal appearance was that of a scholar, the descendant of scholars. He was tall and slender, with the complexion which is bred in the alcove and not in the open air. He used to tell his son Edward that he measured six feet in his shoes, but his son thinks he could

<sup>1</sup> The annoyance which his own shyness and self-consciousness had cost him made him desire that young people should have whatever address and *aplomb* could be got by training, so he urged that they should dance and ride and engage in all out-of-door sports.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.

hardly have straightened himself to that height in his later years. He was very light for a man of his stature. He got on the scales at Cheyenne, on his trip to California, comparing his weight with that of a lady of the party. A little while afterwards he asked of his fellow-traveller, Professor Thayer, "How much did I weigh? A hundred and forty?" "A hundred and forty and a half" was the answer. "Yes, yes, a hundred and forty and a half! That *half* I prize; it is an index of better things."—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S DIGNIFIED PERSONALITY—HIS SMILE.

Emerson might be seen on his way to the post office at precisely half-past five every afternoon, after the crowd there had dispersed. His step was deliberate and dignified, and though his tall, lean figure was not a symmetrical one, nor were his movements graceful, yet there was something very pleasant in the aspect of him even at a distance. The same has also been said of good statuary, even before we know what is its subject. He knew all the people, old and young, in the village, and had a kindly word or a smile for every one of them. His smile was better than anything he said. There is no word in the language that describes it. It was neither sweet nor saintly, but more like what a German poet called the mild radiance of a hidden sun. No picture, photograph, or bust of Emerson has ever done him justice.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS, in "*Emerson Himself*," in "*Sketches from Concord and Appledore*" (Put.).



EMERSON'S SPARENESS OF FIGURE AND SPARENESS  
OF SPEECH.

Every morning, after reading the *Boston Advertiser*, Emerson would go to his study to take up the work of the day previous and cross out every word in it that could possibly be spared. This procedure and his taste for unusual words is what gives the peculiar style to his writing. It was characteristic of him physically and mentally. He had a spare figure ; was sparing of speech, sparing of praise, and sparing of time; in all things temperate and stoical. He had an aquiline face, made up of powerful features without an inch of spare territory.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS. (Cf. above.)

EMERSON'S WANT OF DEFTNESS IN HANDS AND  
FINGERS.

Who can forget the occasion of the delivery of the " Boston Hymn " <sup>1</sup>—that glad New Year when the people were assembled in our large Music Hall to hear read the proclamation of Abraham Lincoln? When it was known that Emerson was to follow with a poem, a stillness fell on the vast assembly as if one ear were waiting to catch

<sup>1</sup> Read by Emerson in the Music Hall, Boston, January 1, 1863. In it was the famous stanza :

" Pay ransom to the owner,  
And fill the bag to the brim.  
Who is the owner ? The slave is owner,  
And ever was. Pay him."

These four lines, short as they are, exemplify, almost perfectly, Emerson's style, force, and quality as a poet.

his voice; but the awful moment, which was never too great for his will and endeavour, was confusing to his fingers, and the precious leaves of his manuscript fell as he rose and scattered themselves among the audience. They were quickly gathered and restored, but for one instant it seemed as if the cup so greatly desired was to be dashed from the lips of the listeners.—MRS. JAMES T. FIELDS, in "*Glimpses of Emerson*," in "*Authors and Friends*" (Hou.).

#### EMERSON A MODERN STOIC—HIS MODESTY.

Emerson was a modern Stoic, and carried that kind of life to a high degree of perfection. He sometimes smoked a cigar, and sometimes drank a glass of wine, but the only real luxury he indulged in was dining with the Atlantic Club once a month in Boston. During his lecturing tours he was the recipient of a great deal of hospitality, and became the objective centre of many a social gathering; but how much he enjoyed this it would be difficult to tell. He was too modest and genuine to like being lionised. He had neither pride, vanity, nor self-conceit; and his great celebrity never weighed heavily upon him or discovered itself in his manners.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS. (Cf. above.)

#### EMERSON'S APPRECIATION OF GOOD THINGS.

Dr. Edward Emerson says somewhere that his father was used to eat whatever was set before him with Spartan-

like indifference. This mistake may have arisen from the good quality of Mrs. Emerson's housekeeping, and the excellent fare which she provided for her husband and his friends. Emerson wished to bear the hardships of life without complaining, but he also knew that to make life unnecessarily hard is not only unwise but has an injurious effect on character. As he would have said, it is not according to nature. A horse seeks the best of the road, and a cow the freshest grass in the pasture. Studious people and others who live mostly indoors are obliged to be careful of what they eat. You could not call Emerson an epicure, but he knew how to appreciate a fine dinner.—  
FRANK PRESTON STEARNS.

#### EMERSON—AND PIE—AND TOBACCO.

The charm of Boswell's "Life of Johnson" is that it not merely records his admirable conversation, but also gives us many of those lesser peculiarities which are as necessary to a true biography as lights and shades to a portrait on canvas. We are much obliged to Professor Thayer (author of "A Western Journey with Emerson") therefore for the two following pleasant recollections, which he has been good-natured enough to preserve for us, and with which we will take leave of his agreeable little volume:

"At breakfast we had, among other things, pie. This article at breakfast was one of Mr. Emerson's weaknesses. A pie stood before him now. He offered to help somebody from it, who declined; and then one or two others, who also declined; and

then Mr. —; he too declined. 'But Mr. —,' Mr. Emerson remonstrated, with humorous emphasis, thrusting the knife under a piece of the pie, and putting the entire weight of his character into his manner—'but, Mr. —, *what is pie for?*'"

A near friend of mine, a lady, was once in the cars with Emerson, and when they stopped for the refreshment of the passengers he was very desirous of procuring something at the station for her solace. Presently he advanced upon her with a cup of tea in one hand and a wedge of pie in the other—such a wedge! She could hardly have been more dismayed if one of Cæsar's *cunei*, or wedges of soldiers, had made a charge against her.

Yet let me say here that pie, often foolishly abused, is a good creature, at the right time and in angles of thirty or forty degrees. In semicircles and quadrants it may sometimes prove too much for delicate stomachs. But here was Emerson, a hopelessly confirmed pie-eater, never, so far as I remember, complaining of dyspepsia; and there, on the other side, was Carlyle feeding largely on wholesome oatmeal, groaning with indigestion all his days, and living with half his self-consciousness habitually centred beneath his diaphragm.

Like his friend Carlyle and like Tennyson, Emerson had a liking for a whiff of tobacco-smoke:

"When alone," he said, "he rarely cared to finish a whole cigar. But in company it was singular to see how different it was. To one who found it difficult to meet people, as he did, the effect of a cigar was agreeable; one who is smoking may be as silent as he likes, and yet be good company. And so Hawthorne used to say that he found it. On this journey Mr. Emer-

son generally smoked a single cigar after our midday dinner, or after tea, and occasionally after both. This was multiplying, several times over, anything that was usual with him at home."

Professor Thayer adds in a note:

"Like Milton, Mr. Emerson 'was extraordinary temperate in his Diet,' and he used even less tobacco. Milton's quiet day seems to have closed regularly with a pipe; he 'supped,' we are told, 'upon . . . some light thing; and after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water went to bed.' "

As Emerson's name has been connected with that of Milton in its nobler aspects, it can do no harm to contemplate him, like Milton, indulging in this semi-philosophical luxury.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

#### HOW EMERSON DEALT WITH HIS CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.

My father was uneasy at seeing the multitude of books for young people that had begun to appear, which prevented our reading the standard authors as children, as he and his brothers had done. He required his son to read two pages of "Plutarch's Lives" every schoolday, and ten pages on Saturdays and in vacation.

The modern languages he was careless about, for he said one could easily pick up French and German for himself.

He had the grace to leave to his children, after they began to grow up, the responsibility of deciding in more important questions concerning themselves, for which

they cannot be too grateful to him. He did not command or forbid, but laid the principles and the facts before us and left the case in our hands.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S GENEROUS BENEFACTIONS.

How Emerson accomplished what he did, with his slight physique and slender strength, will always be one of the marvels of biography. His is the only instance, I believe, on record of a man who was able to support a family by writing and talking on abstract subjects. It is true he inherited a small property, enough to support a single man in a modest way, and without this his career would not have been possible; but the main source of his income was winter lecturing—a practice which evidently killed Theodore Parker, naturally a strong and powerful man. Yet he was not satisfied with this, but wished also to provide for others who had no claims of relationship upon him. His generous efforts in behalf of Carlyle have long since been made public; but the help he gave Mr. Alcott will probably never be known. Least of all would Emerson have wished it to be known.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS, in "*Louisa M. Alcott*," in "*Sketches from Concord and Appledore*" (Put.).

#### WHAT EMERSON DEPENDED ON FOR A LIVELIHOOD.

On lecturing, Mr. Emerson mainly depended for his livelihood, for his books brought him little until the last

years of his life. From courses in the near new England cities and such villages as could be reached in a few hours in a chaise, year by year the programme became more extensive and complicated, and from 1850, for twenty years, each winter meant for him at least two months of arduous travel from Maine to the new States beyond the Mississippi, speaking almost every night, except Sundays, during that time.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S TOILS AS A LECTURER.

If Emerson had not inherited a good property early in life, his career would hardly have been even possible. He never was able to publish more than a third of what he wrote, and his books were not a source of large profit to him. He was obliged to make up the deficiency by lecturing. With what fortitude he did this, considering his slender physique, travelling long distances in the coldest weather over such railroads as then were, with a dismal hotel and bad food at the end of every journey, will always be remembered of him. The compensation for it was that in this way he made the acquaintance of many interesting and distinguished persons. It also added to his celebrity.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON A PUBLIC LECTURER TILL HE WAS NEARLY SEVENTY.

Emerson never became rich. He was never in easy circumstances until he was nearly seventy years old. Lec-

turing was hard work, but he was under the "base necessity," as he called it, of constant labour, writing in summer, speaking everywhere east and west in the trying and dangerous winter season. He spoke in great cities to such cultivated audiences as no other man could gather about him, and in remote villages where he addressed plain people whose classics were the Bible and the "Farmer's Almanac." Wherever he appeared in the lecture-room, he fascinated his listeners by his voice and manner; the music of his speech pleased those who found his thought too subtle for their dull wits to follow. When the Lecture had served its purpose, it came before the public in the shape of an Essay. But the Essay never lost the character it borrowed from the conditions under which it was delivered; it was a lay sermon.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON THE BEST LECTURER OF HIS TIME.

Emerson was the best lecturer of his time: the one who wore the best. Between 1860 and 1870 he gave four courses of lectures in Boston, which were well and profitably attended. No one else could have done this, except perhaps Agassiz. There were others who drew larger houses, but the quality was not so good. Very rarely have such cultivated and intellectual audiences been brought together. A few of his most ardent admirers used to carry opera-glasses with them in order to watch the expression of his face.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS. (*Cf.* above.)

## EMERSON'S POWER AS A LECTURER.

The first impression one had in listening to Emerson in public was that his manner was so singularly quiet and unimpassioned that you began to fear the beauty and force of his thoughts were about to be marred by what might almost be described as monotony of expression. But very soon was this apprehension dispelled. The mingled dignity, sweetness, and strength of his features, the earnestness of his manner and voice, and the evident depth and sincerity of his convictions gradually extorted your deepest attention, and made you feel that you were within the grip of no ordinary man, but of one "sprung of earth's first blood," with "titles manifold"; and as he went on with serene self-possession and an air of conscious power, reading sentence after sentence, charged with well-weighed meaning, and set in words of faultless aptitude, you could no longer withstand his "so potent spell," but were forthwith compelled to surrender yourself to the fascination of his eloquence. He used little or no action, save occasionally a slight vibration of the body, as though rocking beneath the hand of some unseen power. The precious words dropped from his mouth in quick succession, and noiselessly sank into the hearts of his hearers, there to abide for ever. Perhaps no orator ever succeeded with so little exertion in entrancing his audience, stealing away each faculty, and leading the listeners captive at his will. He abjured all force and excitement. The moment he finished, he took up his MS. and quietly glided away—disappearing before his audience could give

vent to their applause.—ALEXANDER IRELAND. (*Cf.* above.)

A SCOTCH ESTIMATE OF EMERSON'S POWER AS  
LECTURER.

A lecturer in the common sense of the term, Emerson is not; call him rather a public monologist, talking rather to himself than to his audience; and what a quiet, calm, commanding conversation it is! It is not the seraph or burning one you see; it is the naked cherubic reason thinking aloud before you. It is a soul totally unsheathed you have to do with, and you ask: Is this a spirit's tongue sounding on its way? so solitary and severe seems its harmony. There is no betrayal of emotion, except now and then when a slight tremble in his voice proclaims that he has arrived at some spot of thought to him peculiarly sacred or dear. There is no emphasis often but what is given by the eye, and this is felt only by those who see him on the side-view. Neither standing behind him nor before can we form any conception of the rapt, living flash which breaks forth athwart the spectator. His eloquence is thus of that high kind which produces great effects at small expenditure of means, and without any effort or turbulence; still and strong as gravitation, it fixes, subdues, and turns us round.—GEORGE GILFILLAN (*an eminent Scotch critic*), in "*A Gallery of Literary Portraits*" (1845).

## EMERSON'S VOICE IN LECTURING.

Emerson's voice had a strange power, which affected me more than any other voice I ever heard on the stage or on the platform. It was pure thought translated into purely intellectual tone—the perfect music of spiritual utterance. It is impossible to read his verses adequately without bearing in mind his peculiar accent and emphasis; and some of the grandest and most uplifting passages in his prose lose much of their effect unless the reader can recall the tones of his voice—a voice now, alas! silent on earth for ever, but worthy of being heard in that celestial company which he, “a spirit of the largest size and divinest mettle,” has now exchanged for his earthly companions. . . . His voice had the stern, keen, penetrating sweetness which made it a fit organ for his self-centred, commanding mind. Yet, though peculiar to himself, it had at the same time an impersonal character, as though a spirit was speaking through him.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE. (*Cf.* above.)

## MARGARET FULLER ON EMERSON AS A LECTURER.

Among his audience some there were—simple souls—whose life had been, perhaps, without clear light, yet still a search after truth for its own sake, who were able to recognise beneath his veil of words the still, small voice of conscience, the vestal fires of lone, religious hours, and the mild teachings of the summer woods. The charm of his elocution was great. His general manner was that of the reader, occasionally rising into direct address or

invocation in passages where tenderness or majesty demanded more energy. At such times both eye and voice called on a remote future to give a worthy reply—a future which should manifest more largely the universal soul as it was then manifest to his soul. The tone of the voice was a grave body tone, full and sweet rather than sonorous, yet flexible, and haunted by many modulations, as even instruments of wood and brass seem to become after they have been long played on with skill and taste; how much more so the human voice! In the most expressive passages it uttered notes of silvery clearness, winning, yet, still more, commanding. The words uttered in those tones floated awhile above us, then took root in the memory like winged seed. In the union of an even rustic plainness with lyric inspiration, religious dignity with philosophic calmness, keen sagacity in details with boldness of view, we saw what brought to mind the early poets and legislators of Greece—men who taught their fellows to plough and avoid moral evil, sing hymns to the gods, and watch the metamorphosis of nature. Here in civic Boston was such a man—one who could see man in his original grandeur and his original childishness, rooted in simple nature, raising to the heavens the brow and eye of a poet.—*Quoted by Alexander Ireland.*

#### HOLMES ON EMERSON AS A LECTURER.

To judge of him as a thinker, Emerson should have been heard as a lecturer, for his manner was an illustration of his way of thinking. He would lose his place, just as his mind would drop its thought, and pick up another,

twentieth cousin or no relation at all to it. This went so far at times that one could hardly tell whether he was putting together a mosaic of coloured fragments, or only turning a kaleidoscope where the pieces tumbled about as they best might. But what fragments these coloured sentences were, and what pictures they often placed before us, as if we too saw them! Never has this city known such audiences as he gathered; never was such an Olympian entertainment as that which he gave them.—*From the "Memorial Address" given by Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes at a meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society (of which Emerson was a member) held at Boston, May 11, 1882.*

#### LOWELL'S ESTIMATE OF EMERSON AS A LECTURER.

I have heard some great speakers and some accomplished orators, but never any that so moved and persuaded men as Emerson. There is a kind of undertone in that rich baritone of his that sweeps our minds from their foothold into deep waters with a drift we cannot and would not resist. . . . There is no man living to whom, as a writer, so many of us feel and thankfully acknowledge so great an indebtedness for ennobling impulses. We look upon him as one of the few men of genius whom our age has produced. . . . Search for his eloquence in his books, and you will perchance miss it, but meanwhile you will find that it has kindled all your thoughts. For choice and pith of language he belongs to a better age than ours, and might rub shoulders with Fuller and Sir Thomas Browne. . . . A diction at

once so rich and so homely as his I know not where to match. It is like homespun cloth-of-gold. . . . I know no one who can hold a promiscuous crowd in pleased attention so long as he. . . . "Plain living and high thinking" speak to us in this altogether unique lay-preacher. We have shared in the beneficence of this varied culture, this fearless impartiality in criticism and speculation, this masculine sincerity, this sweetness of nature which rather stimulates than cloy, for a generation long. If ever there was a standing testimonial to the cumulative value and power of character—we have it in this gracious and dignified presence. What an anti-septic is a pure life!—*Quoted by Mr. Ireland from Lowell's writings—principally from "Emerson the Lecturer," in "My Study Windows."*

EMERSON'S INFLUENCE AS A LECTURER UPON MEN  
OF THOUGHT AND CULTURE.

His younger hearers could not know how much they owed to the benign impersonality, that quiet scorn of everything ignoble, the never-sated hunger of self-culture, that were personified in the man before them. But the older knew how much the country's intellectual emancipation was due to the stimulus of his teaching and example, how constantly he had kept burning the beacon of an ideal life above our lower region of turmoil. To him more than to all other causes did the young martyrs of our Civil War owe the sustaining strength of thoughtful heroism that is so touching in every record of their lives. Those of us who are grateful to Mr. Emerson, as many of

us are, for what they feel to be most valuable in their culture, or perhaps I should say their impulse, are grateful not so much for any direct teachings of his as for that inspiring *lift* which only genius can give, and without which all doctrine is chaff.—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, in "*Emerson the Lecturer*," in "*My Study Windows*."

#### EMERSON'S SPEECH ON ROBERT BURNS.<sup>1</sup>

In that closely filed speech of Emerson's, his every word seemed to have just dropped from the clouds. He looked far away over the heads of his hearers with a vague kind of expectation, as into some private heaven of invention, and the winged period came at last obedient to his spell. . . . Every sentence brought down the house—and it is not so easy to heat Scotsmen with a sentiment that has no hint of native brogue in it. I watched, for it was an interesting study, how the quick sympathy ran flashing from face to face down the long tables, like an electric spark thrilling as it went, and then exploded in a thunder of plaudits. I watched till tables and faces vanished, for I, too, found myself caught up in the common enthusiasm.—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, in "*Emerson the Lecturer*," in "*My Study Windows*."

#### EMERSON'S SPEECH—ANOTHER ACCOUNT.

I have had the good fortune to hear many of the chief orators of our time, among them Henry Clay, John

<sup>1</sup> Delivered before the Boston Burns Club January 25, 1859, the one hundredth anniversary day of Burns' birth.

Quincy Adams, Ogden Hoffman, S. S. Prentiss, William H. Seward, Charles Sumner, Wendell Phillips, George William Curtis, some of the great preachers, and Webster, Everett, Choate, and Winthrop at their best. But I never witnessed such an effect of speech upon men as Mr. Emerson apparently then attained. It reached at once to his own definition of eloquence—"a taking sovereign possession of the audience." He had uttered but a few sentences before he seemed to have welded together the whole mass of discordant material and lifted them to the same height of sympathy and passion. He excited them to smiles, to tears, to the wildest enthusiasm. His tribute to Burns is beautiful to read, perhaps the best which the occasion produced on either side of the ocean. But the clear articulation, the ringing emphasis, the musical modulation of tone and voice, the loftiness of bearing, and the radiance of his face, all made a part of the consummate charm. When he closed, the company could hardly tolerate any other speaker, though good ones were to follow.<sup>1</sup> —JUDGE E. ROCKWOOD HOAR, *in a letter read at the Emerson Memorial Meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, May 11, 1882.*

<sup>1</sup> The company that he addressed was a queer one. First there were the Burns Club—grave, critical, and long-headed Scotchmen, jealous of the fame of their countryman, and doubtful of the capacity to appreciate him in men of other blood. There were the scholars and poets of Boston and its neighbourhood, and professors and undergraduates from Harvard College. Then there were state and city officials, aldermen and common councilmen, brokers and bank directors, ministers and deacons, doctors, lawyers, and "carnal self-seekers" of every grade.—JUDGE HOAR.

## EMERSON'S METHODS OF COMPOSITION.

It was Emerson's habit to spend the forenoon in his study with constant regularity. He did not wait for moods, but caught them as they came, and used their results in each day's work. It was his wont to jot down his thoughts at all hours and places. The suggestions resulting from his readings, conversations, and meditations were immediately transferred to the note-book he always carried with him. In his walks many a gem of thought was in this way preserved. . . . After his note-books were filled, he transcribed their contents in a large, common-place book. When a fresh subject possessed his mind, he brought together the jottings he found he had written down concerning it, forming them into a connected whole, with additional material suggested at the time. His essays were thus very slowly elaborated, wrought out through days and months, and even years, of patient thought. They were all carefully revised, again and again; corrected, wrought over, portions dropped, new matter added, or the paragraphs arranged in a new order. He was unsparing in his corrections, striking out sentence after sentence; and whole paragraphs disappear from time to time. His manuscript was everywhere filled with erasures and emendations; scarcely a page that was not covered with these evidences of his diligent revision.—GEORGE WILLIS COOKE, in "*Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life, Writings, and Philosophy.*"

## EMERSON'S CONCISENESS IN VERBAL EXPRESSION.

Perhaps it may be asserted that the finest, loftiest, and deepest thoughts of Emerson, being poetic in essence, would naturally have found vent in some of the forms of poetic expression, for they announce spiritual facts and principles, vividly and warmly perceived, which are commonly not content with being stated, but carry with them an impulse and demand to be sung or chanted. If his piercing insight had been accompanied by a sensibility corresponding to it, he would have given us more poems and fewer essays; but there was a certain rigidity in his nature which could be made to melt and flow only when it was subjected to intense heat. Some persons were inclined to confound this rigidity with frigidity of character, and called him cold; but the difference was as great as that between iron and ice. The fire in him, which would instantly have dissipated ice into vapour, made the iron in him run molten and white-hot into the mould of his thought, when he was stirred by a great sentiment or an inspiring insight. It is admitted that he is worthy to rank among the great masters of expression; yet he was the least fluent of educated human beings. In a company of swift talkers he seemed utterly helpless, until he fixed upon the right word or phrase to embody his meaning, and then the word or phrase was like a gold coin, fresh from the mint, and recognised as worth ten times as much as the small change of conversation which had been circulating so rapidly around the table, while he was mute

or stammering. That wonderful compactness and condensation of statement which surprise and charm the readers of his books were due to the fact that he exerted every faculty of his mind in the act of verbal expression. A prodigal in respect to thoughts, he was still the most austere economist in the use of words. We detect this quality in his poetry as in his prose; but, in his poetry, it is found to be compatible with the lyric rush, the unwithholding self-abandonment to the inspiration of the muse, which commonly characterises poets who, in their enthusiasm, have lost their self-possession and self-command.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE, in "*Emerson as a Poet*," in *North American Review*; reprinted in "*American Literature and Other Papers*" (Hou.).

#### EMERSON'S FACILITY OF QUOTATION.

Emerson's quotations are like the miraculous draught of fishes. I hardly know his rivals except Burton and Cotton Mather. But no one would accuse him of pedantry. Burton quotes to amuse himself and his reader; Mather quotes to show his learning, of which he had a vast conceit; Emerson quotes to illustrate some original thought of his own, or because another writer's way of thinking falls in with his own—never with a trivial purpose. Reading as he did, he must have unconsciously appropriated a great number of thoughts from others. But he was profuse in his references to those from whom he borrowed—more profuse than any of his readers would believe without taking the pains to count his authorities.

This I thought it worth while to have done. The named references, chiefly to authors, are three thousand three hundred and ninety-three, relating to eight hundred and sixty-eight different individuals. — OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S STYLE AND IMAGERY.

Emerson's style is epigrammatic, incisive, authoritative, sometimes quaint, never obscure, except when he is handling nebulous subjects. His paragraphs are full of brittle sentences that break apart and are independent units, like the fragments of a coral colony. His imagery is frequently daring, leaping from the concrete to the abstract, from the special to the general and universal, and *vice versa*, with a bound that is like a flight.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

#### [EMERSON'S MOST CHARACTERISTIC BOOK.

From the lectures delivered in England Emerson selected a certain number for publication. These make up the volume entitled "Representative Men," which was published in 1850. The title was a happy one, and has passed into literature and conversation as an accepted and convenient phrase. It would teach us a good deal merely to consider the names he has selected as typical, and the ground of their selection. We get his classification of men considered as leaders in thought and in action. He

shows his own affinities and repulsions, and, as everywhere, writes his own biography, no matter about whom or what he is talking. There is hardly any book of his better worth studying by those who wish to understand, not Plato, not Plutarch, not Napoleon, but Emerson himself.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

#### EMERSON'S MOST CHARACTERISTIC POEM.

Of all Emerson's poems the "Concord Hymn" is the most nearly complete and faultless. But its one conspicuous line,

"And fired the shot heard round the world,"

must not take to itself all the praise deserved by this perfect little poem, a model for all of its kind. Compact, expressive, serene, solemn, musical, in four brief verses it tells the story of the past, records the commemorative act of the passing day, and invokes the higher Power that governs the future to protect the Memorial-stone sacred to Freedom and her martyrs.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

#### EMERSON'S DISCONTENT WITH HIS OWN WORK.

The apprehensions which assailed Emerson before his public addresses or readings were not of a kind to affect either speech or behaviour. He seemed to be simply detained by his own dissatisfaction with his work, and was

forever looking for something better to come, even when it was too late. His manuscripts were often disordered, and at the last moment, after he began to read, appeared to take the form in his mind of a forgotten labyrinth through which he must wait to find his way in some more opportune season.

In the summer of 1867 he delivered the address before the Phi Beta at Harvard. He seemed to have an especial feeling of unreadiness on that day, and, to increase the trouble, his papers slipped away in confusion from under his hand as he tried to rest them on a poorly arranged desk or table. Mr. Hale put a cushion beneath them finally, after Emerson began to read, which prevented them from falling again, but the whole matter was evidently out of joint in the reader's eyes. He could not be content with it, and closed without warming to the occasion. It was otherwise, however, to those who listened; they did not miss the old power; but after the reading he openly expressed his own discontent, and walked away dissatisfied.—MRS. JAMES T. FIELDS. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON IN CONVERSATION.

Emerson is one of the best of listeners, whoever may be speaking, seeming to drink in all that is said, and giving the approval of his gracious smile to whatever attracts his attention. He is even more ready to listen than to speak. What he says is to the point, clearly stated, and in a serious, earnest tone; but his conversation is not brilliant in those ways which gave to Margaret Fuller's marvellous

conversational powers a place of their own. It is not his to fascinate and attract by the ceaseless monologue of a versatile talker; for he would make conversation an act of friendship, and finds its charm broken by the presence of more than two. Yet he always speaks wisely, and with a charm and interest all his own. He does not talk easily or much, and needs the stimulus of a sympathetic and vigorous mind to draw out his best treasures of thought. In the midst of a company of bright minds he is not exuberant, never bubbles over; but what he says is marked by a keen wit, and a full wisdom, rich, appropriate, and remarkable. His conversation, when his mind is stimulated by a great theme and a sympathetic friend, is inspiring even beyond his lectures; and then he pours forth his thought in the purest strain of noble words. In this way, his influence over his friends has been very great; and to many a mind his conversation has been an inspiration.—GEORGE WILLIS COOKE, in "*Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life, Writings, and Philosophy.*"

#### EMERSON AND CARLYLE IN CONVERSATION CONTRASTED.

Having bathed,<sup>1</sup> we sat down on the shore; and then Walden and her beautiful woods began to utter their pæans through his lips. Emerson's conversation was different from that of any person I have ever met with, and unequalled by that of any one, unless it be that of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Conway was visiting Emerson. Emerson took him to Walden pond, where they bathed.

Thomas Carlyle. Of course there is no comparison of the two possible, but the contrasts between them are very striking and significant. In speaking of that which he conceives to be ignorant error, Mr. Carlyle is vehement; and when he suspects an admixture of falsehood and hypocrisy, his tone is that of rage; and although his indignation is noble, and the utterances always thrilling, yet when one recurs to the little man or thing at which they are often levelled, it seems to be like the bombardment of a sparrow's nest with shot and shell. On such Emerson merely darts a spare beam of his wit, beneath which a lie is sure to shrivel; but if he breaks any one on his wheel, it must be some one who has been admitted to the banquet of the gods, and violated their laws. Every one who has witnessed the imperial dignity, or felt the weight of authentic knowledge, which characterise Mr. Carlyle's conversation, to such an extent that even his light utterances seem to stand out like the pillars of Hercules, must also have felt the earth tremble before the thunders and lightnings of his wrath; but with Emerson, though the same falsehood is fatally smitten, it is by the invisible, inaudible sunstroke, which has left the sky as bright and blue as before. For the rest, and when abstract principles and truths are discussed, whilst Carlyle astonishes us by the range of his sifted knowledge, he does not convey an equal impression of having originally thought out the various problems in other departments than those which are plainly his own; but there is scarcely a realm of science or art in which Emerson could not be to some extent the instructor of the academies. Agassiz,

as I have heard him say, prefers his conversation on scientific questions to that of any other. I remember him on that day at Walden as Bunyan's Pilgrim might have remembered the Interpreter.—MONCURE D. CONWAY (*written in 1867—Emerson was then sixty-four*).

#### HOLMES ON EMERSON AND HAWTHORNE AS TALKERS.

I have known something of Emerson as a talker, not nearly so much as many others who can speak and write of him. It is unsafe to tell how a great thinker talks, for, perhaps, like a city dealer with a village customer, he has not shown his best goods to the innocent reporter of his sayings. However that may be in this case, let me contrast in a single glance the momentary effect in conversation of the two neighbours, Hawthorne and Emerson. Speech seemed like a kind of travail to Hawthorne. One must harpoon him like a cetacean with questions, to make him talk at all. Then the words came from him at last, with bashful manifestations, like those of a young girl, almost—words that gasped themselves forth, seeming to leave a great deal more behind them than they told, and died out, discontented with themselves, like the monologue of thunder in the sky, which always goes off mumbling and grumbling as if it had not said half it wanted to, and meant to, and ought to say.

Emerson was sparing of words, but used them with great precision and nicety. If he had been followed about by a shorthand-writing Boswell, every sentence he ever uttered might have been preserved. To hear him talk was

like watching one crossing a brook on stepping-stones. His noun had to wait for its verb or its adjective until he was ready; then his speech would come down on the word he wanted, and not Worcester and Webster could better it from all the wealth of their huge vocabularies.—  
*From Dr. Holmes' "Memorial Address," May 11, 1882.*

#### EMERSON'S DISLIKE TO CONTROVERSY.

There probably never was a man of the first class, with a general system of thought at variance with accredited opinions, who exercised so much gentle, persuasive power over the minds of his opponents. By declining all temptations to controversy he never realised the ferocious spirit which controversy engenders; he went on year after year in affirming certain spiritual facts which had been revealed to him when his soul was on the heights of spiritual contemplation; and if he differed from other minds, he thought it ridiculous to attempt to convert them to his individual insight and experience by *arguments* against their individual insights and their individual experiences. To his readers in the closet, and his hearers on the lecture platform, he poured lavishly out from his intellectual treasury—from the seemingly exhaustless Fortunatus' purse of his mind—the silver and gold, the pearls, rubies, amethysts, opals, and diamonds of thought. If his readers and his audiences chose to pick them up, they were welcome to them; but if they conceived that he was deceiving them with sham jewelry, he would not condescend to explain the laborious process in the mines

of meditation by which he had brought the hidden treasures to light. I shall never forget his curt answer to a superficial auditor of one of his lectures. The critic was the intellectual busybody of the place, dipping into everything, but contriving by his immense loquacity to hold the opinion of the town. "Now, Mr. Emerson," he said, "I appreciated much of your lecture, but I should like to speak to you of certain things in it which did not command my assent and approbation." Emerson turned to him, gave him one of his piercing looks, and replied: "Mr. —, if anything I have spoken this evening met your mood, it is well; if it did not, I must tell you that I never argue on these high questions."—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE, in *"Some Recollections of Ralph Waldo Emerson,"* in *Harper's Magazine*, September, 1882.

#### EMERSON AND THE SATURDAY CLUB.

Emerson was a member of the Saturday Club from the first, in reality before it existed as an empirical fact, and when it was only a Platonic idea. The club seems to have shaped itself around him as a nucleus of crystallisation, two or three friends of his having first formed the habit of meeting him at dinner at "Parker's," the "Will's Coffee-House" of Boston. This little group gathered others to itself and grew into a club as Rome grew into a city, almost without knowing how. During its first decade the Saturday Club brought together, as members or as visitors, many distinguished persons. At one end of the table sat Longfellow, florid, quiet, benignant, soft-

voiced, a most agreeable rather than a brilliant talker, but a man upon whom it was always pleasant to look—whose silence was better than many another man's conversation. At the other end of the table sat Agassiz, robust, sanguine, animated, full of talk, boy-like in his laughter. The stranger who should have asked who were the men ranged along the sides of the table would have heard in answer the names of Hawthorne, Motley, Dana, Lowell, Whipple, Pierce, the distinguished mathematician; Judge Hoar, eminent at the bar and in the cabinet; Dwight, the leading musical critic of Boston for a whole generation; Sumner, the academic champion of freedom; Andrew, "the great War Governor" of Massachusetts; Dr. Howe, the philanthropist; William Hunt, the painter, with others not unworthy of such company. And with these, generally near the Longfellow end of the table, sat Emerson, talking in low tones and carefully measured utterances to his neighbour, or listening, and recording any stray word worth remembering on his mental phonograph. Emerson was a very regular attendant at the meetings of the Saturday Club, and continued to dine at its table, until within a year or two of his death.

Unfortunately the club had no Boswell, and its golden hours passed unrecorded.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

EMERSON AND THE SATURDAY CLUB—AN ENGLISH-MAN'S ACCOUNT.<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks afterwards I was present at one of the dinners of the famous Saturday Club. As the wits of the Restoration and Queen Anne's days met at Will's Coffee-House to listen to Dryden or in the more secret conclave of the October Club, so the poets, essayists, and humourists of Boston assembled at these dinners, held sometimes at the houses of the members, and sometimes, when the meetings were larger, in one of the hotels. This was a notable gathering; it was intended to do special honour to the distinguished Massachusetts lawyer who had just returned from presiding at the Chicago Convention which had nominated General Garfield, Republican candidate, for the Presidency. Longfellow was in the chair; James T. Fields was near him. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes was, as usual, the life and soul of the party, and the company included other scarcely less famous men. Emerson had not recently been able to attend many of the meetings, but the occasion was no ordinary one. "Look at Emerson," said Fields, "how happy he appears; was there ever such a sweet smile, and yet how silent he is! In the early days of the club, when Agassiz, its founder, was with us, he and Emerson were the liveliest of us all." It was touching to see the marks of reverence and regard which all displayed to him, and to notice his appreciatory re-

<sup>1</sup> Written, so Mr. Ireland tells us, by one who had the pleasure of visiting Emerson within two years of his death, who had met him intimately on his last visit to England, and who had heard him preach in Manchester on his second visit to England in 1847.

sponses. He thoroughly enjoyed the sparkling sallies of Wendell Holmes, and when Longfellow, to whom speech-making was always a punishment, in a few well-chosen words, referred to the presence of their honoured fellow-member, Emerson was constrained to reply, and he did not forget to tell us that if he could not make them a speech he was only following the example of his friend the chairman. It was altogether a delightful meeting, but already there are melancholy associations with it. Fields, whose "Yesterdays with Authors" has given us so many delightful sketches of famous men, has followed his friends Thackeray and Dickens. Longfellow, the sweetest, the most genial and gentle of poets and men, has also gone, and now we mourn the departure of the greatest of them, Emerson himself, a man in whom were combined the strength of the New England Puritan and the grace and purity of the accomplished Greek.—*Supplied to and quoted by Alexander Ireland.*

#### EMERSON'S REGARD FOR CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR.

Carlyle considered the "Conduct of Life" to be Emerson's best book, and there was reason why it should be. It was the subject of all others which he knew most about. Conduct had been the study of his life. Behaviour was a fine art with him, cultivated partly from motives of prudence, but more for its own sake. From early morning till bedtime he was always the same, always self-possessed. There was no relaxation of it; he was like an athlete in full training. It was difficult to place him in

a position where he did not appear to advantage. But he expected nearly as much from others, and had small patience with those who from ignorance or carelessness infringed the rules of etiquette. One of his expressions was that death or mutilation was the only excuse for being late for dinner.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S IMPATIENCE WITH HUMAN WEAKNESSES.

Emerson has been a diligent student of many literatures and many religions; but all his quotations from them show that he rejects everything in his manifold readings which does not tend to cheer, invigorate, and elevate, which is not nutritious food for the healthy human soul. If he is morbid in anything, it is in his comical hatred of all forms of physical, mental, and moral disease. He agrees with Dr. Johnson in declaring that "every man is a rascal as soon as he is sick." "I once asked," he says, "a clergyman in a retired town who were his companions—what men of ability he saw. He replied that he spent his time with the sick and the dying. I said he seemed to me to need quite other company, and all the more that he had this; for if people were sick and dying to any purpose, we should leave all and go to them, but, as far as I had observed, they were as frivolous as the rest, and sometimes much more frivolous." Indeed, Emerson, glorying in his own grand physical and moral health, and fundamentally brave, is impatient of all the weaknesses of humanity, especially those of men of genius.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE. (*Cf.* above.)

## EMERSON'S AMUSING OPTIMISM.

Emerson's real fault, if he may be said to have had one, was his optimism. Because he had been born with genius, and was otherwise fortunate, he thought every one else might succeed as easily as he had. In this way he often did people great injustice. If they were unfortunate, he concluded that it must be their fault. "Wherever there is failure," he said, "there is some giddiness, some lack of adaptation of means to ends." If he heard of any one who could not obtain work he would say there is always plenty to do for willing hands. Those who were incapacitated by nature from earning their own living fared no better. He thought there was something which every one could do better than anybody else—which might possibly be true if there were as many professions as individuals. When some one spoke of a young German poet, who, it was thought, but for his untimely death, might have been the rival of Schiller, he said: "Yes, but he died: that was against him."—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS. (*Cf.* above.)

## EMERSON'S AVERSION TO VALETUDINARIANS.

It was a peculiarity in Emerson that the thing he most disliked was sickness, while disease he regarded with the strongest aversion. He himself said that during forty years he was never confined to bed for a single day. To him virtue was health, and he used to quote a saying of Dr. Johnson's that "every man is a rascal when he is

sick." He believed that the outward complaint originates in some inward complaint, and that if we were perfectly obedient to the laws of the soul and of nature, there would be no sickness or disease. He believed that human suffering arose from disobedience to laws that may and ought to be obeyed. When obeyed, the sickness will cease, and the weakness will be gone. Among many practical rules laid down for the promotion of the happiness of social intercourse he considered this as one of prime importance : "Never name sickness. Even if you could trust yourself on that perilous topic, beware of unmuzzling a valetudinarian, who will soon give you your fill of it."—ALEXANDER IRELAND. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S COURTEOUS YET RESERVED MANNERS.

Emerson's manners were a fortunate union of natural courtesy and dignified reserve. It was not possible to be familiar with him. They were better than fine manners, or even well-bred manners, for they were so natural and simple as scarcely to attract attention.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS.

#### EMERSON'S PRECEPT, "BE TRUE TO YOURSELF."

Emerson firmly believed in the old saying of every man to his trade. He never preached sermons on weekdays ; or discoursed on public and private duties ; or lectured about self-sacrifice and the necessity of living for others. He believed that such talk did quite as much

harm as good. "Do not try to be good," he would say, "but true to yourself." Wisdom was the best of all virtues because it included all.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS.

#### HOW EMERSON "LIVED ACCORDING TO NATURE."

It was the same [meaning that he always acted according to the dictates of common sense] with his doctrine of living according to nature. He never thought of doing this himself, except so far as a sensible mode of life and unaffected behaviour may be considered so. He was the most conventional man in Concord, and as scrupulous of etiquette as an English clergyman. He was oftener seen with a silk hat—what Mr. Howells calls a cylinder hat—than any other person in the town. In his later years he declined to wear a wig, because it was not according to nature; but neither had he formerly worn a beard, which was quite as little according to nature.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS.

#### EMERSON'S INTEREST IN PRACTICAL AFFAIRS.

Emerson liked the society of statesmen, scientists, business men, railroad managers, of all who could tell him about what was going on in the world—something, he complained, that the newspapers would not do for him. He preferred their society to that of other poets and scholars. Though an unlimited reader of books, he was not properly a scholar himself, and perhaps he felt his own limitation too much in their company.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS.

## THE MEN WHO DID MOST FOR EMERSON.

Emerson's friends were, like himself, cool-headed and scrupulous; but they were not the persons who cared most for him and appreciated him the best. Such men as Theodore Parker, M. D. Conway, David A. Wasson, and Wendell Phillips did more for Emerson almost than his own writings, in spreading his reputation and celebrating his genius. Wherever Phillips and Parker lectured in the West and were asked, as often happened, who were the best of the New England lecturers, they always placed Emerson at the head of the list.—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS.

## THE CHARACTERS OF EMERSON AND LONGFELLOW CONTRASTED.

Opportunities for social communication were sacred in Emerson's eyes, and never to be lightly thrown aside. He wore an expectant look upon his face in company, as if waiting for some new word from the last comer. Upon the occasion of Longfellow's last departure for Europe in 1869, a private farewell dinner took place, where Emerson, Agassiz, Holmes, Lowell, Greene, Norton, Whipple, and Dana all assembled in token of their regard. Emerson tried to persuade Longfellow to go to Greece to look after the Klephs, the supposed authors of Romaic poetry, so beautiful in both their poetic eyes. Finding this idea unsuccessful, he next turned to the Nile, to those vast statues which still stand awful and speechless witnesses

of the past. He was interesting and eloquent, but Longfellow was not to be persuaded. It was an excellent picture of the two contrasting characters—Longfellow, serene, considerate, with his plans arranged and his thought resting in his home and his children's requirements; Emerson, with eager, unresting thought, excited by the very idea of travel to plunge farther into the strange world where the thought of mankind was born.—MRS. JAMES T. FIELDS. (*Cf. above.*)

#### EMERSON AND FRANKLIN CONTRASTED.

Different as they are, Franklin and Emerson are both typical Americans—taken together they give us the two sides of the American character. Franklin stands for the real and Emerson for the ideal. Franklin represents the prose of American life and Emerson the poetry. Franklin's power is limited by the bounds of common sense, while Emerson's appeal is to the wider imagination. Where Emerson advises you to "hitch your wagon to a star" Franklin is ready with an improved axle grease for the wheels. Franklin declares that honesty is the best policy, and Emerson insists on honesty as the only means whereby a man may be free to undertake higher things. Self-reliance was at the core of the doctrine of each of them, but one urged self-help in the material world and the other in the spiritual.—PROF. BRANDER MATTHEWS, in "*An Introduction to American Literature*" (Am.).

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## EMERSON'S JOY IN THE HAPPINESS OF HIS LOT.

All through life Emerson was cheerful by temperament and on principle, and in his last days he was very happy. He took great pleasure in his home. He loved his country, his town, his wife, his family, and constantly rejoiced in the happiness of his lot.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf.* above.)

## "HIS FRIENDS WERE ALL WHO KNEW HIM."

Of Emerson's affections his home-life, and those tender poems in memory of his brothers and his son, give all the evidence that could be asked or wished for. His friends were all who knew him, for none could be his enemy; and his simple graciousness of manner, with the sincerity apparent in every look and tone, hardly admitted indifference on the part of any who met him, were it but for a single hour. Even the little children knew and loved him.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

THE BURNING OF EMERSON'S HOUSE—ITS  
CONSEQUENCES.

The failure of Emerson's strength, and especially his memory, showed in the lectures given in Boston in the winter of 1871-72, but had hardly been generally perceived until after the sickness following the exposure, excitement, and fatigue undergone on the morning of July, 1872, when he and his wife awoke to escape, imperfectly

clad, from their house in flames, into the rain, and then had worked beyond their strength with their zealous and helpful neighbours in saving their effects. His good friends sent him abroad with his daughter Ellen for his rest and pleasure while his house was being rebuilt by their kindness.<sup>1</sup>—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S DECLINING YEARS.

Emerson's last few years were quiet and happy. Nature gently drew the veil over his eyes; he went to his study and tried to work, accomplished less and less, but did not notice it. However, he made out to look over and index most of his journals. He enjoyed reading, but found so much difficulty in conversation in associating the right word with his idea, that he avoided going into company, and on that account gradually ceased to attend the meetings of the Social Circle. But he attended the Lyceum and all occasions of speaking or reading in the Town Hall with unfailing pleasure. He read a lecture before his townspeople each winter as late as 1880, but needed to have one of his family near by to help him out with a word and assist in keeping the place in his manuscript. In these last years he liked to go to church.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.

<sup>1</sup> Before he went abroad he stayed for a while with his cousin, Miss Ripley, in the "Old Manse," at Concord, the home of his youth and boyhood, where also Hawthorne had lived for some time after marriage.

## THE GRACIOUSNESS OF EMERSON IN HIS DECLINING YEARS.

During the last three or four years of Emerson's life his memory frequently failed him, especially in reference to his recollection of more recent events. But he was himself perfectly conscious of this, and though it did not prevent his occasionally delivering lectures and taking part in public gatherings, from the time this defect became manifest he was always accompanied to the platform by his daughter, whose devotion and considerate tact invariably supplied the words and phrases which Mr. Emerson could not recall. To the last he continued to take great interest in the well-being of his neighbours and the intellectual and material progress of his native village. He had never lost his inherent love of dignified simplicity in domestic life, and his home was a model of refinement and unostentatious comfort. He was never more happy than in the company of his grandchildren, and all children loved him. His old age was serene, and the sweetness and gentleness of his character were more and more apparent as the years rolled on. To the last, even when the events of yesterday were occasionally obscured, his memory of the remote past was unclouded. He would talk about the friends of his early and middle life with unbroken vigour; and those who ever had the good fortune to hear him, in the free intercourse of his own study, will not soon forget the charm of his conversation and the graciousness of his demeanour. He would drive

with his visitors to the numerous interesting spots in and about Concord, he would point out the old home of his own family, the house of his friend, Mr. Alcott, and the still more famous "Old Manse" which Hawthorne has made immortal.—ALEXANDER IRELAND. (*Cf.* above.)

THE LAST DAYS—EMERSON'S UNDYING REGARD  
FOR CARLYLE.

In April, 1882, a raw and backward spring, my father caught cold, and increased it by walking out in the rain and, through forgetfulness, omitting to put on his overcoat. He had a hoarse cold for a few days, and on the evening of April 19th I found him a little feverish, so went to see him the next day. He was asleep on his study sofa, and when he woke he proved to be more feverish and a little bewildered, with unusual difficulty in finding the right word. He was entirely comfortable, and enjoyed talking, and as he liked to have me read to him, I read Paul Revere's ride, finding that he could only follow simple narrative. He expressed great pleasure, was delighted that the story was part of Concord's story, but was sure he had never heard it before, and could hardly be made to understand who Longfellow was, though he had attended his funeral only the week before. Yet, though dulled to other impressions, to one he was fresh as long as he could understand anything, and while even the familiar objects of his study began to look strange he smiled and pointed to Carlyle's head and said: "That is my man, my good man!" I mention this because it has

been said that this friendship cooled, and that my father had for long years neglected to write to his early friend. He was loyal while life lasted, but had been unable to write a letter for years before he died. Their friendship did not need letters.—DR. EDWARD WALDO EMERSON. (*Cf.* above.)

THE LAST WORDS, "THAT BEAUTIFUL BOY!"

On March 24th, 1882, Longfellow died, and Emerson, a friend of fifty years' standing, went to the funeral. "The gentleman who lies here was a beautiful soul," he said, "but I have forgotten his name." A few months before he had said to a visitor: "When one's wits begin to fail, it is time for the heavens to open and take him away." This aspiration was fulfilled on April 27, 1882, after a few days' illness from pneumonia. In these last days in his study his thoughts often lost their connection, and he puzzled over familiar objects. When confined to his bed, he desired to see all who came. To his wife he spoke tenderly of their life together and her loving care of him; they must now part, to meet again and part no more. Then he smiled and said: "Oh, that beautiful boy!"—DR. RICHARD GARNETT, in "*Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*," in "*Great Writers*" series. (Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.)

JUDGE HOAR'S TRIBUTE AT EMERSON'S FUNERAL.

The beauty of Israel is fallen in its high place! Mr. Emerson has died; and we, his friends and neighbours,

with this sorrowing company, have turned aside the procession from his home to his grave—to this temple of his fathers, that we may here unite in our parting tribute of memory and love.

There is nothing to mourn for. That brave and manly life was rounded out to the full length of days. That dying pillow was softened by the sweetest domestic affection; and as he lay down to the sleep which the Lord giveth His beloved, his face was as the face of an angel, and his smile seemed to give a glimpse of the opening heavens.

Wherever the English language is spoken throughout the world his fame is established and secure. Throughout this great land, and from beyond the sea, will come innumerable voices of sorrow for this great public loss. But we, his neighbours and townsmen, feel that he was *ours*. He was descended from the founders of the town. He chose our village as the place where his life-long work was to be done. It was to our fields and orchards that his presence gave such value; it was our streets in which the children looked up to him with love, and the elders with reverence. He was our ornament and pride. . . .

That lofty brow, the home of all wise thoughts and high aspirations; those lips of eloquent music; that great soul, which trusted in God and never let go its hope of immortality; that large heart, to which everything that belonged to man was welcome; that hospitable nature, loving and tender and generous, having no repulsion or scorn for anything but meanness and baseness—oh, friend, brother,

father, lover, teacher, inspirer, guide, is there no more that we can do now than to give thee this our hail and farewell! —*Spoken by Judge E. Rockwood Hoar (in Concord Church, April 30, 1882), standing beside the coffin. Dr. James Freeman Clarke was in the pulpit, and also gave an address. Judge Hoar was one of Emerson's most intimate friends.*

#### WHERE EMERSON WAS BURIED.

During Hawthorne's habitation of the Old Manse and his first residence at the Wayside, his favourite walk was to Sleepy Hollow, a beautifully diversified precinct of hill and vale which lies a little way eastward from the village.<sup>1</sup> His habitual resting-place here was a pine-shaded hilltop, where he often met Emerson, Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Elizabeth Hoar, Mrs. Ripley, or Margaret Fuller—for all that sublimated company loved and frequented this spot. . . . This park has become a cemetery—at its dedication Emerson made an oration—and on their beloved hilltop nearly all the transcendent company whom Hawthorne used to meet there, save Margaret Fuller, who rests beneath the sea, lie at last in “the dreamless sleep that lulls the dead.”

First came Thoreau, to lie among his kindred under the wild flowers and the fallen needles of his dear pines, in a grave marked now by a simple stone, graven with his name and age. Next came Hawthorne; and with Emerson, Longfellow, Fields, Ellery Channing, Agassiz, Hoar, Lowell, Whipple, Alcott, Holmes, and George Hillard

<sup>1</sup> Concord, Massachusetts.

walking mournfully by his side, he was borne through the flowering orchards and up the hillside path . . . to a grave on the site of the castle of his fancy; where his dearest friend, Franklin Pierce, covered him with flowers, and James Freeman Clarke committed his mortal part to the lap of earth. . . . Next Mrs. Ripley and Elizabeth Hoar were borne to this "God's acre"; and then Emerson—followed by a vast concourse and mourned by all the world. . . . A gigantic pine towers above him and a massive triangular boulder of untooled pink quartz—already marred by the vandalism of relic-seekers—is placed to mark the grave of the great "king of thought." It bore no inscription or device of any sort until a few months ago, when a bronze plate inscribed with his name and years and the lines,

"The passive master lent his hand  
To the vast soul that o'er him planned—"

was set in the rough surface of the stone. By Emerson lie his wife, his mother, two children of his son, and his own little child—the "wondrous, deep-eyed boy."—DR. THEODORE F. WOLFE, in "*Literary Shrines*" (Lip.)

"THE MOST SHINING INTELLECTUAL GLORY OF A  
CONTINENT."

Seldom had "the reaper whose name is Death" gathered such illustrious harvest as between December, 1880, and April, 1882. In the first month of this period George Eliot passed away, and in the ensuing February Carlyle

followed; in April Lord Beaconsfield died, deplored by his party, nor unregretted by his country; in February of the following year Longfellow was carried to the tomb; in April Rossetti was laid to rest by the sea, and the pavement of Westminster Abbey was disturbed to receive the dust of Darwin. And now Emerson lay down in death beside the painter of men and the searcher of Nature, the English-Oriental statesman, the poet of the plain man and the poet of the artist, and the prophet whose name is indissolubly linked with his own. All these men passed into Eternity laden with the spoils of Time, but of none of them could it be said, as of Emerson, that the most shining intellectual glory and the most potent intellectual force of a continent had departed along with him.—DR. RICHARD GARNETT, in "*Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*," in "*Great Writers*" series. (Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.)

"THE MOST FAMOUS AMERICAN OF HIS TIME."

Emerson was the most famous American of his time; not so celebrated perhaps in his own country as President Lincoln, but in foreign countries he surpassed all others—such is the deep impression which a great writer makes on the minds of men. In Europe he was looked upon as the best representative of our Western Hemisphere. Carlyle celebrated him in England, and Grimm in Germany. The latter said: "There is no other living writer to whom I feel that I owe so much."—FRANK PRESTON STEARNS. (*Cf.* above.)

## EMERSON ESSENTIALLY A POET.

Emerson is so essentially a poet that whole pages of his are like so many litanies of alternating chants and recitations. His thoughts slip on and off their light rhythmic robes just as the mood takes him. Many of the metrical preludes to his lectures are a versified and condensed abstract of the leading doctrine of the discourse. They are a curious instance of survival; the lecturer, once a preacher, still wants his text, and finds his scriptural motto in his own rhythmic inspiration.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

## "WHATEVER IS OF ME IS A POET."

Emerson seems to me to have most fully expressed his peculiar individuality *in his poetry*. He seems to me a poet, *par eminence*—his "Sphinx," his "Uriel," "Bacchus," "The Problem," the "Ode to Beauty," "Each and All," his "Threnody," his "Dirge," his "In Memoriam," "Love and Thought"—where can be found higher flights—more of the music of the spheres? He once said to me: "I am not a great poet—but whatever is of me *is a poet!*"—ELIZABETH PALMER PEABODY (*Emerson's lifelong friend*).—*Quoted by Mr. Ireland from a letter written by Miss Peabody to Mr. Ireland, dated July 2, 1882.*

## EMERSON'S EXULTING CHEERFULNESS AS A POET.

Emerson's imaginative faculty, both in the conception and creation of beauty, is uncorrupted by any morbid sentiment. His vision reaches to the very sources of beauty—the beauty that cheers. The great majority even of eminent poets are “saddest when they sing.” They contrast life with the beautiful possibilities of life which their imaginations suggest, and though their discontent with the actual may inspire by the energy of its utterance, it tends also to depress by emphasising the impossibility of realising the ideals it depicts. But the perception of beauty in nature or in human nature, whether it be the beauty of a flower or of a soul, makes Emerson joyous and glad; he exults in celebrating it, and he communicates to his readers his own ecstatic mood.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE, in “*American Literature*” (Hou.).

CARLYLE, JOHN STUART MILL, AND TYNDALL ON  
EMERSON AS A POET.

In considering Emerson as a poet writing in verse, the objection comes at once that his greatest poetic achievements have been in prose. The question is asked: Can you name one of his essays in which the poetic sentiment and faculty do not predominate? While his command of verse was limited to a few metres, do you not feel that, when the fetters of rhyme are removed from the expression of his thought and feeling, the rhythm of some of his prose sentences is more essentially melodious than the

best of his short, flashing, seven-syllabled couplets? Emerson himself, with a secret liking for verse and an aching desire to master its difficulties, once declared to a friend that the question whether his power lay in prose or verse was referred to Carlyle and John Stuart Mill, and they decided at once for prose. If Tyndall, an ardent admirer of Emerson's poetry, had been selected instead of Mill, probably no decision would have been rendered, for the judges would have disagreed.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE, in "*Emerson as a Poet*," in "*American Literature and Other Papers*."

EARL LYTTON ("OWEN MEREDITH") ON EMERSON  
AS A POET.

I am glad you have spoken up for Emerson's verse, which I admire greatly and think underrated by the majority of critics, who, like the majority of administrators, never know how to deal with a case for which they can find no precedent upon the file. Neither creative nor passionate, and, therefore, not of the highest order of poetry, they must be judged, I think, in reference to the value of the thought that inspires them, and to the fitness of their service as its vehicles. From these points of view they seem to me perfect of their kind; and the roughness of their rhythm a virtue—not a defect of art. They are not Hebrew psalms uttered to the harp, but Delphic oracles, or sunny meditations of a serene Pan, delivered in broken snatches to faint sounds of sylvan flutes. . . . Emerson's work in its *ensemble* (prose and verse together)

I take to be the loftiest, the largest, and the loveliest expression yet given to the philosophy of Democracy.—  
*From a letter written by Earl Lytton to Mr. Ireland, dated July 18, 1882.*

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN ON EMERSON AND  
LONGFELLOW AS POETS.

The supreme poet will be not alone a seer but also a persistent artist of the beautiful. Of those who come before the time for such a poet is ripe, Longfellow, on the whole, has done the most to foster the culture of poetry among us as a liberal art. Emerson has given us thought, the habit of thinking, the will to think for ourselves. He drained the vats of politics and philosophy, for our use, of all that was sweet and fructifying, and taught his people self-judgment, self-reliance, and to set their courses by the stars. He placed chief value upon those primitive laws which are the only sure basis of national law and letters. And as a poet his verse was the sublimation of the rarest mood, that changed as water into cloud, catching the first beams of sunrise on its broken edges, yet not without dark and vaguely blending spots between. Emerson and Longfellow came at the parting of the ways. They are of the very few whom we now recognise as the true founders of an American literature. No successors with more original art and higher imagination can labour to more purpose.—*From "American Poets."*

## EMERSON'S DELIGHT IN METAPHYSICAL DREAMING.

Emerson played with the incommunicable, the inconceivable, the absolute, the antinomies, as he would have played with a bundle of jack-straws. "Brahma," the poem which so mystified the readers of the *Atlantic Monthly*, was one of his spiritual divertissements. To the average Western mind it is the nearest approach to a Torricellian vacuum of intelligibility that language can pump out of itself. Of course no one can hold Emerson responsible for the "Yoga" doctrine of Brahmanism, which he has amused himself with putting in verse. The Oriental side of Emerson's nature delighted itself in these narcotic dreams, born in the land of the poppy and of hashish. They lend a peculiar charm to his poems, but it is not worth while to try to construct a philosophy out of them.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf. above.*)

## EMERSON THE IMPERSONAL MEDIUM OF A VOICE.

More than any of the other great writers of the age, Emerson is a Voice. He is almost impersonal. He is pure from the taint of sect, clique, or party. He does not argue, but announces; he speaks when the Spirit moves him and not longer. Better than any contemporary, he exhibits the might of the spoken word. He helps us to understand the enigma, how Confucius and Buddha and Socrates, and greater teachers still, should have produced such marvellous effects by mere oral utterance. Our modern instructors, for the most part, seem happily born

in the age of print, and labour under singular obligations to Dr. Faustus. With Emerson the printing press seems an accident; he uses it because he finds it in his way, but he does not need it. He would have been a light of the age of Buddha or of Solon, as well as of ours.—DR. RICHARD GARNETT, in "*Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*," in "*Great Writers*" series. (Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.)

#### EMERSON'S GIFT INSIGHT, NOT INDUCTION.

In an unpublished manuscript kindly submitted to me by Mr. Frothingham, Emerson is reported as saying: "God has given me the seeing eye, but not the working hand." His gift was insight: he saw the germ through its envelope; the particular in the light of the universal; the fact in connection with the principle; the phenomenon as related to the law; all this not by the slow and sure process of science, but by the sudden and searching flashes of imaginative double vision. He had neither the patience nor the method of the inductive reasoner; he passed from one thought to another not by logical steps but by airy flights, which left no footprints.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON A MAN OF INTUITION—A SEER.

Emerson's place as a thinker is somewhat difficult to fix. He cannot properly be called a psychologist. He made notes and even delivered lectures on the natural

history of the intellect ; but they seem to have been made up, according to his own statement, of hints and fragments rather than of the results of systematic study. He was a man of intuition, of insight, a seer, a poet, with a tendency to mysticism. This tendency renders him sometimes obscure, and once in a while almost, if not quite, unintelligible.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

#### EMERSON'S INTENSE AMERICANISM.

Emerson is a characteristically American voice. He precisely realises the idea which the American scholar ought to set before him. American literature must not be feeble and imitative. It is vain to transplant a million cultivated Englishmen across the Atlantic, if they think and speak exactly like those who stay at home. But neither must American literature be conceited and defiant, a rebel against rules founded in the eternal fitness of things. "A Kosmos," if you will, but not "one of the roughs." Emerson's attitude is perfect, manly, and independent, slightly assertive, as becomes the spokesman of a literature on its trial. "Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote those books." He puts the Old World under contribution; he is full of verbal indebtedness to its philosophers and poets; but what he borrows, that, he can repay. His thoughts continually repeat Plato and Goethe; but every competent reader

perceives that it is a case of affinity, not of appropriation. Poetical and religious minds will think alike; it would nevertheless have made little real difference to Emerson if Plato and Goethe had never lived. But it would have made a great difference to this American if Washington had never lived. He was thoroughly possessed with the ideas of the Declaration of Independence, and when some one<sup>1</sup> sneered at them as "glittering generalities"—"Glittering generalities!" cried Emerson indignantly, "they are blazing ubiquities!"—DR. RICHARD GARNETT, in "*Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*," in "*Great Writers*" series. (Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.)

"THE PROPHET AND PHILOSOPHER OF YOUNG MEN."

But after we have made all possible deductions from Emerson there remains the fact that he is a living force, and, tried by home standards, a master. Wherein does the secret of his power lie? He is the prophet and philosopher of young men. The old man and the man of the world make little of him, but of the youth who is ripe for him he takes an almost unfair advantage. One secret of his charm I take to be the instant success with which he transfers our interest in the romantic, the chivalrous, the heroic, to the sphere of morals and the intellect. We are let into another realm unlooked for, where daring and imagination also lead. The secret and suppressed heart finds a champion. To the young man

<sup>1</sup> Rufus Choate.

fed upon the penny precepts and staple Johnsonianism of English literature, and of what is generally doled out in the schools and colleges, it is a surprise; it is a revelation. A new world opens before him. He drops all other books. . . . Emerson is the knight errant of the moral sentiment.—JOHN BURROUGHS, in "*Birds and Poets, with Other Papers*" (Hou.).

#### EMERSON'S CREED AND SPIRITUAL CHARACTER.

Emerson's creed was a brief one, but he carried it everywhere with him. In all he did, in all he said, and so far as all outward signs could show, in all his thoughts, the indwelling Spirit was his light and guide; through all nature he looked up to nature's God; and if he did not worship the "man Christ Jesus" as the churches of Christendom have done, he followed his footsteps so nearly that the good Methodist, Father Taylor, spoke of him as more like Christ than any man he had known.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S ESSENTIAL TEACHING THE CREED OF AMERICA.

Another kind of immortality, perhaps the only kind which Emerson greatly valued, is his already. He is incorporated with the moral consciousness of his nation. "His essential teaching," says Professor Norton, in a letter to the writer, "has become part of the unconsciously acquired creed of every young American of good and

gracious nature." If more is to be claimed for Emerson, as it well may, we should rest the claim, apart from his literary worth, on his impersonation of one of the main tendencies of his time, and his rebuke of another. This is an age of science, and science has found no such literary interpreter as Emerson. Not only, says Professor Tyn-dall, is Emerson's religious sense entirely undaunted by the discoveries of science, but all such discoveries he comprehends and assimilates. "By Emerson scientific perceptions are continually transmuted into the finer forms and warmer views of an ideal world." While thus in sympathy with his age where it is right, he is against it where it is wrong. It has, as a whole, made the capital mistake of putting happiness before righteousness. Utilitarianism has begotten effeminacy, and effeminacy discontent, and discontent despair. Posterity will see in Emerson one man valiant and manly in a repining age.—DR. RICHARD GARNETT, in "*Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*," in "*Great Writers*" series. (Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.)

#### EMERSON THE POET IS EMERSON THE ESSAYIST.

We thus can see and understand the position of the poetry of Emerson in the literature of his country and his time. It is more truthful to call him a great man who wrote poems than to call him a great poet. It seems to me essential to remember this definition that we may avoid errors in either direction. His poetry at its best reaches heights which Longfellow and Bryant could not

attain. Its august purpose renders comparison with the verse of Poe utterly out of the question. Emerson was a greater man than any one of these three; and once in a while he wrote lines as artistic as Longfellow's, as stately as Bryant's, as melodiously beautiful as Poe's. He was more than an eminent prose writer who produced verse. His poetry would give him a high reputation were his prose blotted out. And yet his prose overshadows his verse; his character as literary force seems higher than his rank as poet. His three hundred pages of poems, read them and praise them and revere them as you will, but restate concisely the message of his essays. So long as this result was chosen by Emerson himself, his readers may well accept it without regrets or attempts at denial. He wrote, as one of his fragments tells us,

" For thought and not praise;  
Thought is the wages  
For which I sell days,  
Will gladly sell ages,  
And willing grow old,  
Deaf and dumb and blind and cold."

—PROF. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON, in "*American Literature, 1607-1885*" (Put.).

THE REASON OF EMERSON'S WANT OF POPULARITY  
AS A POET.

Popularity is a relative term; in one sense Sophocles, Dante, and Shakespeare are not popular. Without stop-

ping to discuss this broad question, it is evident that Emerson, though deserving, as we have seen, to be called a favoured writer, is not popular as poet, in the sense in which we apply the adjective to Shelley or Keats, Bryant or Longfellow, for instance. His own prose has reached many highly intelligent minds to which his verse is still comparatively unwelcome. This fact is not wholly due to the general intelligibility and popularity of prose as compared with poetry; for it is equally true, by converse, that the wings of song can carry a thought farther afield than the slow steps of prose; and that a poem is more likely to be widely loved than is an essay. Emerson's own verse shows that his highest and noblest poems, when most artistically written, are the most widely popular. We may properly conclude, therefore, that the failure of a part of Emerson's poetry, compared with that produced by minds of the same general literary rank, or with the average of his own prose, was his own fault and not that of his readers.—PROF. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON. (*Cf.* above.)

#### EMERSON'S POETRY CRITICALLY ESTIMATED.

The poetry of Emerson, whatever its special manner or theme, is the poetry of acquiescence, optimism, idealism, spiritualism, individualism. It often has a didactic and magisterial tone, rather than the moralising tone of Wordsworth or Cowper. "Do this," "shun that," it swiftly says. "Be not a fool, not a money-maker, but a poet and a lover of the beautiful and the good." Nature,

rightly understood, is a fit and lovely thing, and so is the soul at its best. Poetry notes and intensely describes some of the qualities of each, or of both. It was no wonder that Emerson anticipated, in half a dozen poems, the later conclusions of the evolutionists. He was the singer of the upward march of nature and the onward march of man. His poetic field was too broad to be tilled thoroughly in many parts. He was too proverbial to be a great constructive artist. He gives us saws, sayings, admonitions, flashes, glimpses, few broad constructed pictures. With these we are content, and do not ask him for epics, tragedies, or "Excursions."—PROF. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON.

EMERSON'S WANT OF UNIFORM EXCELLENCE  
AS A POET.

Emerson, more than any American poet, severely tests and almost defies the laws of poetics, as they have been deduced from other languages and applied to English scansion; but yet from his work may be selected many an example proving anew that English is capable of fine and deliberate metrical and melodious effects. He who recognises Emerson's aims and methods will attempt neither to prove all his failures to be glorious successes, which men are too blind to see; nor to declare him rugged or unmelodious or obscure—the poet who, when he would, could sing so sweet and clear a song.—PROF. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON.

## HOLMES ON EMERSON'S POETRY.

One may not like to read Emerson's poetry because it is sometimes careless, almost as if carefully so, though never undignified even when slipshod ; spotted with quaint archaisms and strange expressions that sound like the affectation of negligence, or with plain, homely phrases, such as the self-made scholar is always afraid of. But if one likes Emerson's poetry he will be sure to love it ; if he loves it, its phrases will cling to him as hardly any others do. It may not be for the multitude, but it finds its place like pollen-dust and penetrates to the consciousness it is to fertilise and bring to flower and fruit.—  
*From Dr. Holmes' " Memorial Address," May 11, 1882.*

"THE FOUNDER OF NO SCHOOL, THE FORMULATOR  
OF NO THEORY."

In Emerson the intellectual keenness and profundity of a philosopher, and the imagination of a poet, were combined with that childlike simplicity and almost divine humility which made him the idol of his fellow-townsmen and the easily accessible friend of the ignorant and the poor. No discrepancy exists between his written words and the record of his life. He fought his battle against error and vice, not with the usual weapons of denunciation and invective, but by proclaiming in speech and deed the beauty of truth and virtue. He has founded no school, he has formulated no theory, he has abstained from utter-

ing a single dogma, and yet his moral and intellectual influence has made itself felt as an active and growing power for highest good over the whole breadth of the continent. —EMMA LAZARUS, in "*Emerson's Personality*," in the *Century Magazine*, July, 1882.

#### EMERSON'S INDIVIDUALITY OF CHARACTER.

Everything about a man like Emerson is important. Look at his picture there—large, strong features on a small face and head—no blank spaces; all given up to expression; a high, predacious nose, a sinewy brow, a massive, benevolent chin. In most men there is more face than feature; but here is a vast deal more feature than face, and a corresponding alertness and emphasis of character. Indeed, the man is made after this fashion. He is all type. His mind has the hand's pronounced anatomy, its cords and sinews and multiform articulations and processes, its opposing and coördinating power. There may have been broader and more catholic natures, but few so towering and audacious in expression, and so rich in characteristic traits. Every scrap and shred of him is important and related. Like the strongly aromatic herbs and simples—sage, mint, wintergreen, sassafras—the least part carries the flavour of the whole. Is there one indifferent, or equivocal, or unsympathising drop of blood in him? Where he is at all he is entirely—nothing extemporaneous; his most casual word seems to have lain in pickle for a long time, and is saturated through and through with the Emersonian brine. Indeed, so pungent

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and penetrating is this quality, that his quotations seem more than half his own.—JOHN BURROUGHS.

## HAWTHORNE ON EMERSON.

It was good to meet him in the wood-paths, or sometimes in our avenue, with that pure, intellectual gleam diffusing about his presence like the garment of a shining one; and he so quiet, so simple, so without pretension, encountering each man alive as if expecting to receive more than he would impart, and, in truth, the heart of many an ordinary man had, perchance, inscriptions which he could not read. But it was impossible to dwell in his vicinity without inhaling more or less the mountain atmosphere of his lofty thought.—*From "The Old Manse," in "Mosses from an Old Manse."*

THE LOVE AND VENERATION WHICH EMERSON  
INSPIRED.

It is impossible for those who only knew Emerson through his writings to understand the peculiar love and veneration felt for him by those who knew him personally. Only by intercourse with him could the singular force, sweetness, elevation, originality, and comprehensiveness of his nature be fully appreciated; and the friend or acquaintance, however he might differ from him in opinion, felt the peculiar fascination of his character, and revolved around this solar mind, in obedience to the law of spiritual gravitation—the spiritual law operating, like the natural law, directly as the mass, and inversely as the square of

the distance. The friends nearest to him loved and honoured him most; but those who only met him occasionally felt the attraction of his spiritual turn, and could not mention him without a tribute of respect.—EDWIN P. WHIPPLE, in "*Some Recollections of Ralph Waldo Emerson*," in *Harper's Magazine*, September, 1882.

EMERSON'S WORTH AND GREATNESS ESTIMATED BY  
HIS EARLY SCHOOL-FELLOW.

The language of eulogy is apt to run wild, but I have no words to tell my sense of the greatness and worth of Ralph Waldo Emerson. I cannot remember when I did not know and admire him. We learned our A B C together. We sate together at our writing school when he, ten years of age, and I, eleven, wrote verses on our naval battles in the War of 1812. The only time I can remember when he played was (when we were some six or seven years old) on the floor of my mother's chamber. He lived always from the earliest in a serene world of letters. Never since Shakespeare has our English tongue been used with such beauty as by our great friend. . . . I have never presumed to analyse him, I have not needed to do so. "The affections are their own justification." The reverence, the love he inspired, bear witness to his rare worth.—WILLIAM H. FURNESS, D.D. *Quoted by Alexander Ireland, in his "Biographical Sketch."*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Since the first edition of this Memoir was published the author of it has received from the venerable Dr. Furness, Philadelphia—Emerson's school-fellow and senior by about a year—a letter from which he ventures to give the following extract [given above]."—ALEXANDER IRELAND.

## WALT WHITMAN ON EMERSON.

Let me conclude by the thought, after all the rest is said, that most impresses me about Emerson. Amid the utter delirium-disease called book-making, its feverish cohorts filling our world with every form of dislocation, morbidity, and special type of anæmia or exceptionalism (with the propelling idea of getting the most possible money, first of all), how comforting to know of an author who has, through a long life, and in spirit, written as honestly, spontaneously, and innocently as the sun shines or the wheat grows—the truest, sanest, most moral, sweetest literary man on record—unsoiled by pecuniary or any other warp—ever teaching the law within—ever loyally outcropping his own self only—his own poetic and devout soul! If there be a Spirit above that looks down and scans authors, here is one at least in whom it might be well pleased.—*In The Critic*, December 3, 1881.

## EMERSON'S SENSE OF DIVINE COMPANIONSHIP.

Emerson was true to the orders he had received. Through doubts, troubles, privations, opposition, he would not

"bate a jot  
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer  
Right onward."

All through the writings of Emerson the spirit of these orders manifests itself. His range of subjects is very wide,

ascending to the highest sphere of spiritual contemplation, bordering on that "intense inane" where thought loses itself in breathless ecstasy, and stooping to the homeliest maxims of prudence and the every-day lessons of good manners. And all his work was done, not so much

"As ever in his great Taskmaster's eye,"

as in the ever-present sense of divine companionship.—  
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. (*Cf.* above.)


"EMERSON'S LIFE OUR BEST IDEAL."

Judged by his life Emerson comes very near our best ideal of humanity. He was born too late for the trial of the cross or the stake, or even the jail. But the penalty of having an opinion of his own and expressing it was a serious one, and he accepted it as cheerfully as any of Queen Mary's martyrs accepted his fiery baptism. His faith was too large and too deep for the formulæ he found built into the pulpit, and he was too honest to cover up his doubts under the flowing vestments of a sacred calling. His writings, whether in prose or verse, are worthy of admiration, but his manhood was the underlying quality which gave them their true value. It was in virtue of this that his rare genius acted on so many minds as a trumpet call to awaken them to the meaning and the privileges of this earthly existence with all its infinite promise. No matter of what he wrote or spoke, his words, his tones, his looks, carried the evidence of a sincerity which per-

vaded them all and was to his eloquence and poetry like the water of crystallisation; without which they would effloresce into mere rhetoric. He shaped an ideal for the commonest life, he proposed an object to the humblest seeker after truth. Look for beauty in the world around you, he said, and you shall see it everywhere. Look within, with pure eyes and simple trust, and you shall find the Deity mirrored in your own soul. Trust yourself because you trust the voice of God in your inmost consciousness.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

“WHAT HE TAUGHT OTHERS TO BE  
HE WAS HIMSELF.”

There are living organisms so transparent that we can see their hearts beating and their blood flowing through their glossy tissues. So transparent was the life of Emerson; so clearly did the true nature of the man show through it. What he taught others to be he was himself. His deep and sweet humanity won him love and reverence everywhere among those whose natures were capable of responding to the highest manifestations of character. If He who knew what was in a man had wandered from door to door in New England, as of old in Palestine, we can well believe that one of the thresholds which “those blessed feet” would have crossed, to hallow and receive its welcome, would have been that of the lovely and quiet home of Emerson.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.



## *READERS' AND STUDENTS' NOTES.*

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1. With respect to Emerson all Americans should remember what James Russell Lowell has said: "We were still socially and intellectually moored to English thought till Emerson cut the cable." Americans have no more excuse to be ignorant of Emerson than Englishmen have to be ignorant of Shakespeare.

2. Although Emerson's writings in no way depend for their interpretation upon a knowledge of his biography, yet his character and personality were so unique, so completely in harmony with his philosophy of life, and so richly illustrative of it, that no doubt the best introduction one can make to a study of his writings is to become acquainted with himself; that is to say, to take pains to know him personally, so far as this can be done by reading and by study.

3. The standard life of Emerson is that by his literary executor, James Elliot Cabot. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 2 vols., \$3.50.)

4. There are, however, several other biographical accounts of Emerson, of much importance. Of these, the most noteworthy is that by Oliver Wendell Holmes in the "American Men of Letters" series. Dr. Holmes' "Life" was a work of love, but it was also a work of great painstaking and careful and attentive study. Of all the books on Emerson yet written, it is the one which by itself gives the best, all-round, complete idea of Emerson's mind, character, personality, and achievement. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.25.)

5. An appreciative account of Emerson, explanatory of his writing and thought, as well as biographical, is that by Dr. Richard Garnett, Keeper of Printed Books in the British Museum, London, England. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. "Great Writers" series. \$1.00.) This work, as is the case of all the works of the "Great Writers" series, contains a full bibliography.

6. For a brief but exceedingly interesting account of the home and social life of Emerson, of his personality and character, and of his behaviour towards his family, friends, and fellow-citizens, the book to read is "Emerson in Concord," by Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson, Emerson's son. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.75.) This work, so the author tells us, was written for "my father's neighbours and friends, to show to those who care to see . . . the citizen and villager and householder, the friend and neighbour." Dr. Emerson's narrative is illuminated constantly by extracts from his father's journals.

7. One of the most enthusiastic of Emersonians is Moncure D. Conway, and one of the most interesting of Emersonian books is Moncure D. Conway's "Emerson at Home and Abroad." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.)

8. Especially excellent from a student's point of view is the little monograph on Emerson, entitled "Ralph Waldo Emerson, Poet and Philosopher," by A. H. Guernsey, in Appleton's "Library of Brief Biographies." (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 50 cents.) The peculiar merit of this book is the large number of extracts it gives from Emerson's writings, with introductions, explanations, criticisms, etc. The whole of Emerson's writing is in this way presented to the student in a sort of abstract or miniature.

9. A larger, more exhaustive, and more ambitious work for students is George Willis Cooke's "Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life, Writings, and Philosophy." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$2.00.)

10. Emersoniana of great interest will be found as follows:

(1) In A. Bronson Alcott's "Concord Days"—which contains also a characteristic account of Hawthorne. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co. \$1.50.)

(2) In Mrs. James T. Fields' "Authors and Friends"—which contains also interesting reminiscences of Longfellow, Holmes, and Whittier. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.)

(3) In George William Curtis' account of Emerson's home in "Little Journeys to the Homes of American Authors," first published in 1853. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$1.75.)

(4) In Frank Preston Stearns' "Sketches from Concord and Appledore," a series of delightful papers, both reminiscent and of fine critical value, on such topics as "Concord Thirty-odd Years Ago," "Hawthorne," "Emerson Himself," "Whittier," "Louisa M. Alcott," "Celia Thaxter," "Wendell Phillips," etc. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$2.00.)

(5) In Julian Hawthorne's "Ralph Waldo Emerson," in *Harper's Magazine*, July, 1882.

(6) In Emma Lazarus' "Emerson's Personality," in the *Century Magazine*, July, 1882.

(7) In F. B. Sanborn's "Homes and Haunts of Emerson," in *Scribner's Monthly*, February, 1879.

(8) In the "Emerson Number" of *The Literary World*, May 22, 1880.

(9) In E. P. Whipple's "Some Recollections of Ralph Waldo Emerson," in *Harper's Magazine*, September, 1882.

11. Critical and explanatory accounts of Emerson will be found as follows:

(1) In E. C. Stedman's "Poets of America." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$2.25.)

(2) In Prof. Charles F. Richardson's "American Literature, 1607-1885." (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 2 vols. in one, \$3.50.)

(3) In Horace E. Scudder's "Men and Letters." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.25.)

(4) In E. P. Whipple's "Recollections of Eminent Men." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.)

(5) In Joel Benton's "Emerson as a Poet."

(6) In F. B. Sanborn's "The Genius and Character of Ralph Waldo Emerson"; a series of lectures delivered at the Concord School of Philosophy by Mr. Sanborn, George Willis Cooke, Julian Hawthorne, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, Miss E. P. Peabody, Dr. William T. Harris, and others. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$2.00.)

(7) In George William Curtis' "Literary and Social Essays," a work which contains also papers on Irving, Hawthorne, Longfellow, and Holmes. The paper on Emerson is principally reminiscent and anecdotal. (New York: Harper & Brothers. \$2.50.)

(8) In John Burroughs' "Birds and Poets, with Other Papers." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$2.00.)

(9) In James Russell Lowell's "My Study Windows." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$2.00.)

(10) In Horace E. Scudder's "Men and Letters," chap. ii., "Emerson's 'Self.'" (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.25.)

(11) In E. P. Whipple's "American Literature and Other Papers." (Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.) Mr. Whipple's papers in this volume are entitled "Emerson and Carlyle" and "Emerson as a Poet."

12. Americans were somewhat disappointed in Matthew Arnold's estimate of Emerson. Mr. Arnold, however, had the courage of his convictions, and first gave to the world the estimate that caused the widespread disappointment in a lecture delivered in Boston. This lecture will be found in the volume of Arnold's works entitled "Discourses in America." (New York: The Macmillan Co. \$1.50.) An account of the lecture, together with a reply to it by the American critic, David A. Wasson, will be found in Frank Preston Stearns' book, above mentioned, "Sketches from Concord and Appledore." (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$2.00.)

13. An excellent and appreciative English book about Emerson is one by Emerson's friend for forty years, Alexander Ireland, of Inglewood, Cheshire, entitled "Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life, Genius, and Writings. A Biographical Sketch." (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co.) With this work is incorporated the author's "Recollections of Emerson's Visits to England in 1833, 1847-48, and 1872-73." It contains also the characteristic addresses delivered by Emerson, in Boston, on Robert Burns and Walter Scott, and very many other interesting miscellanea and memorabilia.

14. A considerable portion of Emerson's writing is "caviare to the general." Much of it, however, is by no means so. It consists—that is to say the prose part consists—almost entirely of essays, or of lectures which are merely essays in lecture form. Almost the only piece of prose work Emerson ever published that did not consist of essays (and also the only piece of autobiographical writing—except a few poems—that ever came from his pen) is his "English Traits," first published in 1856. "English Traits" is perhaps the most easily read and the most generally enjoyable of all the prose things that Emerson wrote. And on that account perhaps it is the best work for a beginner in Emersonian study to take up. It must be remembered, however, that the book was first published as long ago as 1856, and was written, without doubt, several years before that. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.75.)

15. Of Emerson's essays, we know of none more generally interesting and instructive, and at the same time more thoroughly characteristic, than the one entitled "Compensation." This essay has been chosen as the representative of Emerson in "Prose Masterpieces from Modern Essayists," a series of entire, unmutilated selections from the works of Irving, Emerson, Lowell, De Quincey, Carlyle, Macaulay, and about fifteen other great names in modern literature—a series excellent in every way. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 3 vols., \$3.75.)

16. Emerson's essays as originally published comprise the

following volumes: (1) "Miscellanies," now known as "Nature, Addresses, and Lectures"; (2) "Essays, First Series"; (3) "Essays, Second Series"; (4) "Representative Men"; (5) "Conduct of Life"; (6) "Society and Solitude," and (7) "Letters and Social Aims." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.75 or \$1.25 each volume.) The titles, except in the case of "Representative Men," and perhaps "Nature," are not significant. Of these volumes, the one that the novice in Emersonian study will perhaps find most delightful and most instructive is "Society and Solitude." "Representative Men," however, is generally named as Emerson's strongest and most characteristic work. The "Men" are Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Napoleon, and Goethe. A companion book, or rather a book which Emerson's book suggests, and which if possible should be read with it, is Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero-Worship."

17. Most people will prefer to read Emerson, not in his complete works, or even in complete books, but in selections. An excellent set of selections, sixteen essays in all, covering almost all periods of Emerson's power as a writer, is that contained in Nos. 2 and 3 of "Modern Classics." (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 75 cents each number.)

18. Emerson's poetry, like his prose, is not all of a kind to tempt the casual reader. No American poet, however, offers richer reward for attentive and thoughtful reading. The following poems will well repay any effort that may be spent upon them. Most of them, indeed, may be read without effort: (1) "The Humble Bee," (2) "The Rhodora," (3) "Each and All," (4) "Forerunners," (5) "Concord Hymn," (6) "Wood Notes," (7) "Threnody" (a lament for his son, the "wondrous child"), (8) "The Snow Storm," and (9) "May Day."

19. For the student of Emerson who wishes to thoroughly understand his poetry and his essays, we know of no better help than the little volume entitled "Emerson's Poems and Essays" in the "Riverside School Library," with "Copious Notes, Introduction to the Poems, and Biographical Introduction to the

Essays," by George H. Browne. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 60 cents.)

20. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., of Boston, as in the case of the other "New England Poets," except Bryant (who, however, is generally considered a New Yorker), are the holders of most of the copyrights of Emerson's works. Their editions of both the complete works and of individual works are numerous and—it goes without saying—excellent.

21. The friendship of Emerson and Carlyle was one of the most notable things in literary history. Begun in 1832, upon a visit of Emerson made in that year to Great Britain, it continued as long as life lasted for them. During a considerable portion of the time, a correspondence was kept up by the two great thinkers. This correspondence has been preserved; and, edited by Emerson's intimate friend, Prof. Charles Eliot Norton, it has been published in two volumes of remarkable interest. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$3.00.) Interesting also is the correspondence of Emerson with Carlyle's friend, John Sterling. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.00.)











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